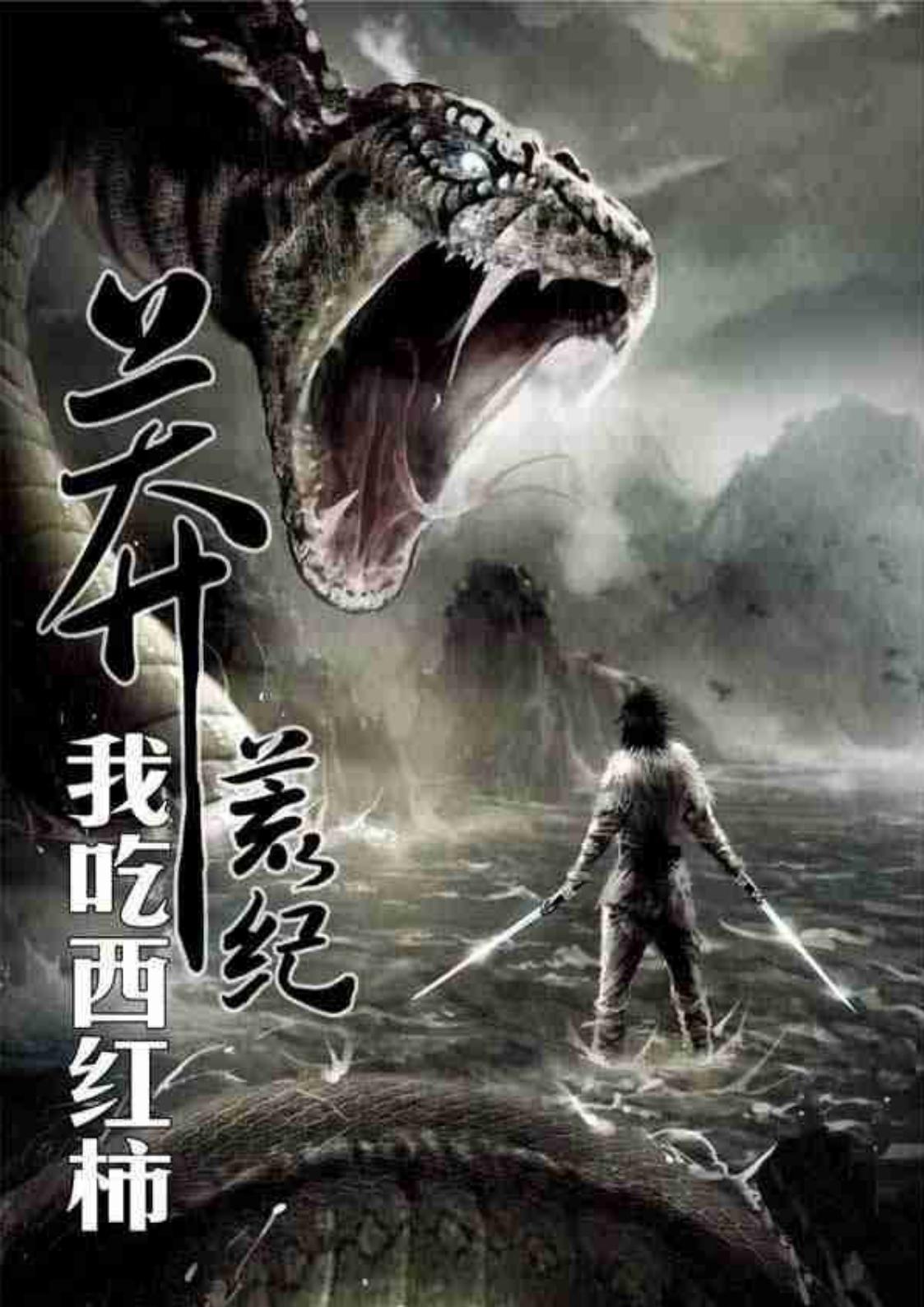


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Desolate Era

(莽荒纪)

Book 8: Raindragon Guard

Fate had never been kind to Ji Ning. Wracked by illnesses and infirm his entire life on Earth, Ning knew early on that he would die as a teenager. What he didn't know was that there really was such a thing as life after death, and that the universe was a far larger place than he thought. A lucky twist of fate (one of the few in Ning's life) meant that Ning was reborn into a world of Immortals and monsters, of Ki Refiners and powerful Fiendgods, a world where Dynasties lasted for millions of years. A world which is both greater...and yet also smaller...than he ever could imagine. He would have the opportunity to join them, and in this life, Ning swore to himself, he would never let himself be weak again! The Era he was born into was a Desolate one, but Ning would make it his era.

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Chapter 1 – Jadesea

The temperament of the black-robed maiden, Yu Wei, was something Ji Ning couldn't quite get a grasp on. However, when he thought about how many times the white-haired elder had accepted the black-white pellets and liquefied elemental essence on his behalf, Ning felt absolutely delighted. In addition, this series of Dao Debates had also served as a form of baptism. He could sense that he had evolved, somehow.

"Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning!" A voice rang out in celebration. Ning turned to look, only to see the skinny, small, white-robed Mu Northson charging over with incomparable excitement. He hurriedly howled, "Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, you are way too powerful. You consecutively defeated so many Wanxiang Adepts, and even that seemingly powerful Northmont Blackcurrent was defeated by you. Just now, I asked senior apprentice-sister Winterain; that senior apprentice-sister Yu Wei who defeated you is a reincarnated Immortal, and one who has trained for ten years more than we have, and entered the school long before us."

"Don't worry, I'm not upset," Ning laughed. Northson was still incomparably excited. "In short, you are way too powerful. I heard senior apprentice-sister Winterain say that it is extremely rare to see someone like you, and that even in the Black-White College, you can be considered a supreme genius. Perhaps, in a few thousand years or a few tens of thousands of years, the entire Black-White College will have firmly memorized your name."

Ning shook his head. "You praise me over-much." Suddenly...he heard voices ring out from the side. "Uncle-Master Headmaster." "Uncle-Master Headmaster." A chorus of voices called out.

The group of Primal Daoists, who had arrived soundlessly and without announcement and who had been hiding themselves, all walked over at this point in time.

"All of you can go back now." Daoist Jadesea, who was walking at the head of the group, said calmly, "Ji Ning, stay behind!"

"Yes." Quite a few members of the third generation still wanted to converse with Ning, and at least ensure that Ning knew their names. This was because everyone understood something: Given how powerful he had shown himself to be, so shortly after entering the school...so long as he didn't die, he would definitely be a truly influential figure of Stillwater Commandery. However, since the headmaster had given the order, they all naturally departed.

"Ji Ning?" Senior apprentice-brother Holyfire gave Ning a deep look, memorizing him.

"Intriguing, intriguing. More and more intriguing." The fat, sloppy-looking youth had a look of delight on his face. He lazily ambled away.

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Ning said to the nearby Northson, "Junior apprentice-brother Northson, you go back as well." Northson nodded. "Alright." He immediately departed alongside Winterain. Soon, no one was left in the entire Dao Debate Palace aside from the Primal Daoists and Ji Ning, as well as the Immortals who had hidden themselves in the corner.

"Ji Ning." Daoist Jadesea looked at Ning, and the Primal Daoists next to him looked at Ning as well, their eyes filled with curiosity. "Uncle-Master Headmaster," Ning acknowledged respectfully.

"Do you know what a Sword Immortal is?" Daoist Jadesea asked. Ning replied, startled, "Sword Immortals? Some Immortals who use flying swords in extremely powerful ways are addressed respectfully by others in this manner, I believe. Can it be that this term has a special meaning?" Even up till now, Ning still wasn't quite sure as to what the term 'Sword Immortal' truly meant.

"Uncle-Master Diancai didn't tell you?" Daoist Jadesea seemed to have thought of something as he spoke. Ning replied, "Master didn't discuss Sword Immortals with me in detail. He only provided me with guidance regarding sword arts. He told me to finish mastering the [Neo-Tripartite Lotus Sword] and the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], then to seek him out again."

Daoist Jadesea nodded. "That explains it, then. If one is capable of executing the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], then one has already become a Sword Immortal. You should know that this world is filled with many Daos, yes?"

"Yes, I do." Ning nodded. In his heart, he added...that he also knew that the most supreme figure of the Three Realms, Mother Nuwa, had comprehended eighty four thousand different Daos! But of course, this was according to what he had heard in the past from the Lord of Cui Palace.

"The Daos are numerous beyond counting." Daoist Jadesea looked at Ning. "In addition, there are different levels of Dao as well." Ning's ears twitched. "Different levels of Dao?"

"Right." Daoist Jadesea nodded. "The Dao is divided into the supreme 'Heavenly Daos', the extremely exalted 'Grand Daos', and the ordinary 'Daos'."

"The Heavenly Daos, the Grand Daos, and Dao?" Ning held his breath. Not even his master had discussed these things with him in detail.

"The Heavenly Daos are the most fundamental of Daos, and they are the underpinning of the functioning of the cosmos. They are incomparably supreme. For example, the Five Elements! After Pangu established the universe, the universe was formed from the most basic of particles, the Five Elements. Normally, when we talk about 'swearing an oath by the Dao of the Heavens', or making a 'Oath of Blood to the Dao of the Heavens', we are swearing an oath to the Heavenly Daos. The Heavenly Daos uphold the functioning of the universe, and once we violate an oath sworn to them, they will

naturally punish us. No one can escape the punishment of the Daos of the Heavens. This is the most supreme of Daos."

Ning was shocked and stunned.

"According to the legends, so long as one can comprehend a Heavenly Dao, then one will become one of the most incomparably exalted figures of the Three Realms." Daoist Jadesea's eyes were filled with a boundless eagerness as well, and the gazes of the Primal Daoists next to him became lost and dreamy as well. To them, the Heavenly Daos were legends and myths.

"But of course, I've never even heard of anyone who comprehended a Heavenly Dao." Daoist Jadesea laughed as he looked at Ning. "Never, not even in any of the legends or stories."

Ning sighed to himself. Right. Heavenly Daos. When Immortal practitioners swore an oath, they would do so towards the Dao of the Heavens. It was the Daos of the Heavens which upheld the functioning of the entire Three Realms. It was naturally incomparably exalted.

"One level lower than the Heavenly Daos are the Grand Daos!" Daoist Jadesea looked towards Ji Ning. "Every single Grand Dao is also extremely exalted, and it is extremely difficult to even gain an initial insight into them."

"On a level lower than the Grand Daos are the most numerous, ordinary Daos." Daoist Jadesea looked at Ji Ning. "Your Dao of Rainwater, and the Daos of Freezing Ice, Mystic Ice, and the like... these are all ordinary Daos."

Ning nodded. He now understood that Daos were divided into levels as well! Heavenly Daos were the most supreme, the fundamental Daos which underpinned the cosmos!

"The Dao of the Sword, however, is one of the Grand Daos!" Daoist Jadesea looked towards Ning. "Everyone who has embarked upon the

Dao of the Sword is known as a Sword Immortal!"

"Ah?!" Ning stared. The Dao of the Sword was one of the Grand Daos? He had actually embarked onto the path of a Grand Dao?

"To gain an initial insight into the Dao of the Sword, one must clearly develop and comprehend one's sword-heart and make it lustrous." Daoist Jadesea looked towards Ji Ning. "This is also the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]. You need to have a heart which is supremely, sincerely devoted to the sword, and you need to make that sword-heart of yours lustrous...the difficulty of doing this is even greater than reaching the Dao Domain level of your Dao of Rainwater."

Ning nodded in acknowledgement. It was, indeed, a bit harder to reach the 'Lustrous Sword-Heart' level than to develop his Rainwater Sword Domain.

"This is the difference in Daos. It is even harder to gain an initial insight into a Grand Dao than it is to reach the Dao Domain level in an ordinary Dao." Daoist Jadesea stared at Ning, his gaze blazing.

"This is also why you were able to defeat even Northmont Blackcurrent, who has reached the level of possessing five Dao Domains. It is because the Dao you comprehended is a Grand Dao! Although he has comprehended many, they are all lesser Daos! In addition...the Dao of the Sword, even amongst the Grand Daos, is known as the Grand Dao with the greatest offensive combat potential. Sword Immortals are legendary for their combat power as well."

"In our Black-White College...including you, we only have a total of two Sword Immortals," Daoist Jadesea said. "One is you, with the other being your master, Uncle-Master Diancai." Ning nodded.

"Because you have gained an insight into the Grand Dao of the Sword, our Black-White College shall bestow upon you two thousand black-white pellets." Daoist Jadesea took out a jade bottle, handing it

over to Ning.

Ning was instantly overjoyed. Two thousand black-white pellets? When his master had bestowed him with black-white pellets, he had informed Ning that he would receive a thousand black-white pellets for reaching the Dao Domain level, and just two thousand black-white pellets for his soul reaching the 'divine sense' level. Generally speaking, only Primal Daoists would have a soul at the 'divine sense' level. And yet, just gaining an initial insight into a Grand Dao merited a similar award of two thousand black-white pellets!

"Why are there no records of this within the black-and-white book?" Ning hurriedly asked. "The black-and-white book has quite a few records regarding various rewards of black-white pellets, such as for joining the Raindragon Guard, becoming a two-clawed Raindragon Guard, a three-clawed Raindragon Guard...why aren't there any records regarding becoming a Sword Immortal?"

"Heavenly Daos. Grand Daos. Ordinary Daos. The fact that there are these differences is not something which is to be carelessly exposed." Daoist Jadesea looked towards Ning. "If you hadn't comprehended them for yourself and we told you of them, it would actually harm you by affecting your Dao-heart. You would be unwilling to go comprehend an ordinary Dao, and would focus on trying to master a Grand Dao. But do you think a Grand Dao is so easily comprehended? If you aren't already at that level, letting you know about the levels will harm you for no benefit."

Ning now understood.

"Even us." Daoist Jadesea looked at the crowd of Primal Daoists. "Even we only learned about this matter after we finished comprehending a complete Dao Path. Now that we have mastered a complete Dao Path, the next step for us is to comprehend a Grand Dao!"

Ning now understood.

"Grand Daos are extremely hard to understand. Even in our Black-White College, and even for the likes of senior Northwalker, there has never been anyone who has completely and thoroughly mastered a Grand Dao." Daoist Jadesea looked towards Ning. "The path of mastering a Grand Dao is incomparably more difficult than the path of mastering an ordinary Dao; thousands of times more difficult. However, the power of a Grand Dao is also countless times greater. You must diligently train and not slacken off in the slightest."

"Yes." Ning nodded with solemnity.

"Alright. With regards to Sword Immortals...if you have any questions, go ask your master. In the entire Black-White College, only your master is capable of truly teaching you." Daoist Jadesea laughed, then turned and left.

"Ji Ning, it is quite rare for me to officiate over a recruitment ceremony, and yet when I did, I ended up taking you in, hahaha." Daoist Wu Xiu and the others all chatted for a bit with Ning as well. Every single one of them spoke with Ning for a bit. Clearly, as they saw it...in a few decades, or perhaps in a century, Ning would be on a completely equal level to them. Shortly afterwards, the Primal Daoists all departed.

Only now did Ning let out a sigh of relief. "Heavenly Daos? Grand Daos? Daos?" Ning suddenly thought of something. "The creator of the underwater estate even had many Immortal-ranked magic treasures and Pure Yang magic treasures. I also heard that he was a Fiendgod who was born during the era of primal chaos, before the creation of the universe, and that he was one of the major powers of the Three Realms. Even the [Starseizing Hand] he developed was so powerful...he most assuredly must have comprehended a Grand Dao. Only, I wonder if Daoist Threelives was able to comprehend a Heavenly Dao."

"Well, enough of that. Two thousand black-white pellets!" Ning looked at the jade bottle in his hands. "And I earned quite a few black-white pellets during the Dao Debates as well. Should I go to

the Dao Repository Vault to exchange them for techniques?" Ning began to ponder. "For divine abilities? Or for the [Soulshaker Art]?"

Right at this moment, a voice was transmitted towards him. "Ji Ning." This voice echoed in his mind. "Master." Ning hurriedly looked around.

"Go back and calm your mind and focus on your training. You must solidify your foundation to fully reap the gains from these Dao Debates. I trust you will make even more advancements if you do. Three days later, come and see me." Immortal Diancai's voice rang out in Ning's mind. As for the four Immortals in the corner of the room, Immortal Diancai, the short elder, the juvenile child, and the crowned, bearded elder all gave Ning a final look before disappearing into thin air.

Ning stared around within the Dao Debate Palace, but saw no one else present. Still, he acknowledged respectfully, "Yes, Master."

Ning immediately boarded his flying boat. Transforming into a streak of light, he flew out of the Dao Debate Palace and returned to his Darknorth Peak. He was going to calm his heart and solidify the gains he had recently reaped.

Chapter 2 – Northmont Blacktiger’s Style

The flying boat soared through the skies, entering the Darknorth Peak’s estate.

“Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” Forgard, Cloudship, and Cloudjade, the three Zifu Disciples, all called out with respect. The Whitewater Hound next to them looked towards Ning as well, and Ning grinned towards him. “Uncle White, I’m going to go into my private training room to engage in some closed-door training. Only call me if there is something extremely important.”

The Whitewater Hound nodded. Ning then went directly into his private training room.

Cloudjade nibbled on her lips as she stared at Ning. “He just glanced at me. He didn’t even give me a good look. Hmph. Back in the tribe, there were so many people who wanted to become Dao-Companions with me. But this senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning hasn’t even engaged in a proper conversation with me.”

Cloudjade’s alluring charm was indeed tremendous. The fox spirits and other beautiful maidservants which Ning had seen in the Carefree Caverns were all inferior to her. Even Ninelotus was slightly inferior to her. The only one comparable to her was that reincarnated Immortal, the Rainbowflame Fairy, Yu Wei. No wonder Cloudjade had always been self-confident!

She naturally wanted to reel in this disciples of the Black-White College. This Ji Ning, in her mind, truly was the best selection for her to become Dao-Companions with. But unfortunately...up till now, Ji Ning had never said a word to her.

“I refuse to believe it!” Cloudjade mused to herself silently.

“I wonder how the battles at the Dao Debate Palace went.” Cloudship, by her side, had a look of anticipation in his shining eyes. “None of us know,” Forgard said gravely. Cloudship glanced at Forgard, then

pursed his lips.

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Within the private training room. Ning sat there in the lotus position, streaks of sword energy flying around him, occasionally chopping, occasionally stabbing, occasionally blocking. One stance after another came out...they appeared ordinary, but they contained a truly heart-shaking fierceness to them.

Suddenly, all of the sword energies around him vanished. "Whew." A hint of a smile appeared on Ning's face. "I've spent an entire night training, and I have indeed made further gains, as well as solidified my previous insights."

"The Grand Dao of the Sword? Sword Immortal?" A look of anticipation was in Ning's eyes. Whoosh. Ning rose to his feet, and the stone door opened with a rumble. Soon, he arrived outside the courtyard.

There was a hint of light in the skies. Ning stood there in the courtyard, and as he took in a deep breath of air, filled with dense amounts of natural, elemental energy, he felt all the happier.

"Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning." A soft voice suddenly rang out nearby. Ning turned to look. It was Cloudjade, dressed in a light pink Daoist robe. Although the robe was rather loose and large, on her incomparably ravishing body, it gave an alluring feeling that was both faint and bone-deep. Her long black hair was simply combed, but it also gave off a natural, magnetic aura.

"She truly is a lovely person. Why in the world did Baiwei have her come and be my retainer?" Ning mused to himself. Although Cloudjade was indeed exquisite in her appearance, what Ning wanted was to be truly carefree and unbound. How could he so casually select a Dao-Companion? Even if he were to choose one, it would be an incomparably major affair. For now, at least, this Cloudjade hadn't moved Ning's heart in the slightest.

"I haven't had a chance to thank you yet, senior apprentice-brother, for giving me the chance to enter your service and join the Black-White College." Cloudjade's willowy, graceful body curtsied in a show of respect.

Ning nodded gently. Suddenly, a figure ran over from outside. It was a young servant. The young servant couldn't help but glance towards that exalted, unsurpassably seductive Immortal practitioner, Cloudjade, but then he hurriedly said in a nervous manner, "Master, someone is outside, and he claims to be your senior apprentice-brother. He's right at the door. He's already been waiting for the amount of time needed to boil a kettle of tea."

"Oh?" Ning nodded, then laughed and said in clear voice, "Which senior apprentice-brother is it, might I ask? I've neglected you by making you wait here for so long, senior apprentice-brother. Please, come in, quickly."

"Hurry and go prepare refreshments," Ning said, looking at the nearby Cloudjade. "Alright." Cloudjade hurriedly bowed, then quickly departed.

The ordinary, mortal youth had cold sweat rolling down his back. He hurriedly left as well. Just now, when he had taken a secret glance at that unsurpassingly alluring beauty, Cloudjade, he felt as though he had seen one of the legendary fairies. At the same time, he sighed to himself, "If I could have a fairy like her as my woman, even if I could only live for an hour, I would be satisfied. And yet, Master doesn't even care about a maiden like her at all."

"Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning." A youth dressed in a black Daoist robe came walking in. His eyes seemed to contain the stars in them, and a smile was on his face. "I previously met you both during the grand entrance ceremony as well as the Dao Debate Palace, but I hadn't had the chance to say anything to you. My name is Hu Yongchun, and my Daoist title is the same as my name; Yongchun, meaning 'Everspring'."

"Senior apprentice-brother Everspring, please come in." Ning, as an Immortal practitioner, had an incomparably perfect memory. He remembered that during the Dao Debates, this Everspring had been by the side of the fat, sloppy-looking youth. Someone who was able to stand directly next to that youth was most likely one of the fairly talented Wanxiang Adepts of the College.

The two fellow disciples sat there facing each other, while Cloudjade delivered fine wine and fruits to them. "Junior apprentice-brother, you have quite a lovely lady here." Everspring laughed as he delivered a few words of praise, and Cloudjade's face turned slightly red.

Ning laughed. "She's just taking the chance to train under my service." "Oh." Everspring nodded. He immediately noted that this junior apprentice-brother of his seemed to hold no interest at all in this devilishly attractive maiden, and so he didn't mention her any further.

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Cloudjade served the two, watching as Ji Ning and Everspring, two formal disciples of the Black-White College, chatted and laughed amongst themselves. At first, she had been filled with eagerness, but towards the end, she felt vaguely heartsick. At first, Everspring had praised her beauty, but afterwards, both he and her own master, Ji Ning, had completely focused on their conversation, not sparing so much as a glance for her.

Both of them were blessed by the heavens with talent; clearly, they didn't care about her appearance. This truly hurt her heart.

"Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning!" Suddenly, a voice rang out from outside. "Another one," Ning mused to himself. The reason why he had left the private training room so early today was precisely because he realized that his performance during the Dao Debates had probably attracted the attention of quite a few fellow disciples, who would come in order to make friends with him. In turn, the more

friends he had amongst his fellow disciples, the better it would be for him.

The formal disciples of the Black-White College, after all, were people who outsiders would view as extremely hard to befriend, even if they wanted to. One formal disciple after another arrived, either alone or in pairs or triplets, causing the courtyard to become quite rowdy. Every so often, one of them would leave, but there would always be from three to five people within the courtyard.

Cloudjade, as his female servant, naturally served them personally. What hurt her the most was...aside from those senior apprentices who offered her a kind word of praise, there was only a single senior apprentice-brother out of the twenty-plus formal disciples who gave her so much as a close look. That senior apprentice-brother's Daoist title was 'Joybliss'. According to what he said, he delighted in tandem-training.

"These disciples of the Black-White College, aside from that one that likes to engage in tandem-training, truly all have extraordinary Dao-hearts." In the end, Cloudjade could only sigh to herself in amazement. Indeed, everyone capable of joining the Black-White College was a peerless talent. And, from the sounds of it...

Her own master, Ji Ning, was one of the most outstanding members of this group of peerless talents, someone who could be described as a monster! This was why so many fellow apprentice-brothers and apprentice-sisters had come to befriend him.

"Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, I brought two of my junior apprentice-sisters over as well. Would you be willing to meet them?" A soft voice rang out, and instantly, Ji Ning and the two people he was chatting with turned their heads. They soon saw three streaks of light moving towards them through the air from afar.

"Senior apprentice-sister Ninelotus, since you wish to meet with me, how would I dare refuse?" Ning raised his head to stare at Ninelotus, high in the sky. Ninelotus was accompanied by a lovely woman

dressed in red robes as well as a silver-robed maiden with a fierce aura. The three women landed from the skies at the same time.

"They..." Upon seeing these three senior apprentice-sisters descend, Cloudjade suddenly had a sense of self-contempt in her heart. The bearing and aura of these three...only they were truly worthy of being referred to as fairies.

"This is junior apprentice-sister Qingqing, while this is junior apprentice-sister Whitewater." Ninelotus laughed as she looked towards Ning. "Greetings to you, senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning." Both the willowy, red-robed woman and the silver-robed maiden looked towards Ning.

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Only with the arrival of nightfall did Ning's Darknorth Peak return to its usual calm. His fellow disciples had all left. Only...one more person had arrived. It was Northmont Baiwei.

"Baiwei, sit." Ning and Baiwei sat down. Baiwei smiled and said, "I knew that you would definitely be very busy today, and that quite a few of your colleagues would definitely come visit you. So, I intentionally waited until it was almost dark before coming."

"Baiwei, you truly are formidable," Ning said in praise. Baiwei laughed loudly. "How could I not guess that this would happen? Right; today, I've come at the orders of my father." Ning was startled. "Your father?"

Northmont Blacktiger...the intimidating aura of that man filled Ning with fear. He definitely wasn't inferior to the headmaster of the Black-White College, and he was a man with an exceptionally dominating, overbearing aura! One of the candidates to be the next Marquis of Stillwater!

"You've come here because...?" Ning was stunned.

Clap, clap. Baiwei clapped his hands twice. Instantly, the two Zifu

Disciple servants standing behind him immediately moved forward. They each took out multiple black jade platters from their storage-type magic treasures. These black jade platters were all engraved with the exquisite carving of a black tiger, and the platters themselves were crystal clear, incomparably beautiful works of art. Atop each platter, there were multiple items.

There were, in total, six black jade platters. They had on them a pair of jade bottles, a small boat, a set of black wings, and two sets of flying swords that were the size of sewing needles.

"There are two sets of flying swords. One has 72 flying swords, while the other has 18. They are all excellent Mortal-ranked flying swords."

"This set of black wings...is a high-grade Mortal-ranked wing-type magic treasure."

"This boat is a top-grade flying magic treasure."

"This jade bottle holds a miasma gas treasure, which is a type of fleeing treasure."

"This other jade bottle holds five hundred kilograms of liquefied elemental essence." Baiwei said, with composure and assurance, "Accept all of these things."

Ning was poleaxed. He could clearly tell that these were all extraordinary gifts. Aside from the set of black wings, which was slightly poorer, the others were extremely valuable. "This...how can I accept this?" Ning hurriedly refused. "It's too expensive."

"My father ordered me to come here, and I've already delivered the items. Everything else has nothing to do with me." Baiwei waved his hands and said, "You don't have to be modest. You and my father have had the chance to meet each other, and my father has given these congratulatory gifts with good intentions. Just accept them."

Ning hesitated momentarily. Since Baiwei and himself were good friends, there now existed an irreversible relationship between

himself and Northmont Blacktiger's Estate. Since that was the case, he might as well accept them.

"Alright." Ning nodded.

"That's more like it! No point in not accepting my father's things, and these aren't that important for someone like him," Baiwei said. "Oh, right. You asked me to search for that Meng Roch. I've already found him. It's true; he hasn't been able to join any sect at all. Do you want for me to send someone to deliver him directly to the Black-White College?"

Chapter 3 – Our Master, Ji Ning

“Meng Roch?” Ning’s eyes lit up. Although he had only known Roch for a few days when they met on the way to Stillwater City, he felt extremely well-disposed towards Roch. In addition, the fact that he was willing to sacrifice his own life for others meant that he was someone worthy of Ning’s assistance.

“Cloudship!” Ning called out in a high voice. Cloudship soon hurried over, bowing and saying with respect, “Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, you wanted me?”

Ning nodded, then pointed to the nearby Northmont Baiwei. “Baiwei, in a short while, lead this Cloudship and arrange for someone to send Cloudship to Meng Roch’s place. Let Cloudship bring Roch back to the Black-White College.”

“Alright.” Baiwei nodded. Ning looked towards Cloudship. “Cloudship, do you hear and understand?” The reason why he wanted Cloudship to go was because he could tell that Cloudship was a lively fellow who was able to make snap decisions based on the actual situation. Whatever Ning asked him to do, he would definitely do perfectly well.

Cloudship immediately nodded. “Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, don’t worry. I will definitely invite Meng Roch over.” “Good.” Only now did Ning nod.

Baiwei laughed. “I’ve carried out my father’s tasks as well. Next are the gifts that I personally prepared for you.” “Baiwei, what are you...” Ning hurriedly moved to refuse, but Baiwei immediately interjected, “Don’t decline. You and I are brothers. You have entered the Black-White College, and had a glorious performance at the Dao Debate. As your brother, how can I not prepare a congratulatory gift? Don’t worry; because of the restrictions which Father placed on me, I’m not as wealthy or as generous as Father, and my gift isn’t that valuable.”

Ning let out a laugh. If Baiwei had already put things this way, what else could he, Ning, do? Baiwei waved his hand, and a thick, seemingly ordinary-looking book appeared. Although this book seemed to be made from excellent materials, Ning couldn't notice anything special about it at first glance.

"I imagine that quite soon, you'll be going out to do some adventuring. Immortal practitioners all must be tempered by countless life-and-death experiences. Only then will we be able to walk farther on our Immortal paths." Baiwei laughed and continued, "Thus, I prepared a map for you! This is a map of the entire Xia Dynasty."

Ning called out in shock, "The entire Xia Dynasty?" The Xia Dynasty was unimaginably vast! "Don't get too excited. The Xia Dynasty is enormous, and this map only goes into detail regarding our Stillwater Commandery. It only has some rough information regarding the distant places of the vast Xia Dynasty, which is thousands of times larger than our commandery. At least, however, you won't get lost." Baiwei was a bit resigned. "A detailed map of the entire Xia Dynasty is something which even I don't have access to."

Ning sighed inwardly. To Immortal practitioners who went out adventuring, the importance of a good map was unquestionable. This was because there were simply far too many mysteries, dangers, and terrifying locations in this vast world. If one moved about blindly and ignorantly, one might accidentally charge into a fatal area. If that happened, one really would die a miserable death.

"Now that I've done what I need to, it's time for me to leave." Baiwei rose and laughed, "I know that for a genius like you, your training time is quite precious." Ning rose to his feet as well and asked, "Leaving so soon?"

"Your Black-White College is within Stillwater City. I can come any time." Baiwei led his servants and Cloudship, then quickly departed.

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Ning watched as Baiwei and the others transformed into streaks of light and departed. Only now did he lower his head to stare at the six jade platters of treasures that were before him.

"My [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] just so happened to be lacking in swords, and now I've received two sets of them." Ning stared at the two sets of flying swords; one a set of 72, the other a set of 18. The set of 18 swords in particular appeared to be all exceptionally fine flying swords. "Although I haven't used the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] many times, Northmont Blacktiger clearly knew long ago that I need a large number of flying swords. He really lives up to his reputation as being a potential candidate for the next Marquis of Stillwater. His information really is reliable."

"As a Zifu Disciple, it should't be too hard for me to cobble together seven hundred or so Mortal-ranked flying swords. But once I reach the Wanxiang Adept level, I'll need seven hundred or so Earth-ranked flying swords. As a Primal Daoist, I'll need Heaven-ranked flying swords."

Ning sighed to himself. The [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] was something which caused even Immortal Juhua concern. Ning also possessed the [Nuwa Painting], and walked the path of the Sword Immortal. Indeed, the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] was extremely well suited for him. Most likely, the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], in his hands, would be even more effective than it had been for the Thousand Swords Immortal.

Ning continued to view the treasures. "Wings?" Ning looked at the black wings atop the jade platter. "They are much better than the wings I acquired after killing the disciples of Snowdragon Mountain." The wings weren't that useful for Ning, as he primarily used them to cover-up the fact that he used the [Windwing Evasion].

This was a divine ability which the ancestor of the Yuchi clan had only acquired after rescuing a Celestial Immortal, who in his gratitude had bestowed it upon the clan. It was abundantly clear from the fact that even the entire Black-White College only had five

divine abilities that divine abilities were incomparably precious. No wonder the Yuchi clan insisted on using wing-type magic treasures to disguise themselves.

"The flying boat!" Ning stared at the fourth present, then laughed. "A top-grade Mortal-ranked magic treasure. In the future, I'll be able to travel much more quickly." Ning stretched his hands out, effortlessly binding both the wings and the boat-type magic treasures.

"The miasma gas magic treasure." Ning stared at the fifth treasure. He picked up that white jade bottle. After easily binding it, he discovered that within, there was a white pearl, surrounded by an extremely dense foggy white miasma gas.

"Step back. Go far away." Ning swept the surrounding area with his gaze, and the nearby Cloudjade hurriedly retreated all the way out of the courtyard. "Activate." Ning willed it.

Instantly, a large amount of white miasma gas filled the courtyard. The white miasma gas covered an area of many tens of meters, and the density of it was such that even Ning's Fiendgod-enhanced eyes were only just barely able to view his own fingers. In fact, it even influenced the surrounding elemental ki flow, causing Ning to be unable to sense what was around him.

"According to what I hear, miasma gas magic treasures are extremely suited for fleeing, precisely because they prevent both vision with the naked eye as well as sensing one's surroundings." Ning nodded lightly. "So it really is the case. Even I, the person who released the miasma gas, am unable to see the surrounding area. Once I release this miasma gas...for a short period of time, my foe will be unable to find me. I can choose a direction and immediately flee."

Miasma gases were unable to distinguish from friend or foe. What Ning bound was the jade bottle and the pearl within it; that miasma gas simply existed within the pearl itself.

"I wonder if my divine sense can see through it." Ning willed it, and

suddenly...whoosh! His divine sense spread out, instantly encompassing the entire courtyard. "Eh?" Ning revealed a hint of delight. Although the miasma gas was so powerful as to be able to disturb the flow of natural elemental energy, under Ning's divine sense...everything still appeared.

"Excellent." Ning was overjoyed. "To others, miasma gas magic-treasures are only for fleeing, but for me...I can release the miasma gas to befuddle my foes, then engage them and kill them in close quarters." This combat tactic instantly flashed through Ning's mind. Given that his own divine sense was not affected by the gas, in the future, it would be much easier for him to deal with Wanxiang Adepts.

"Yet another killer move," Ning laughed. Ning then looked towards the sixth jade platter. Five hundred kilograms of liquefied elemental essence! This was an astonishing fortune; ordinary Earth-ranked magic treasures were worth merely five kilograms, which was to say that this gift was the equivalent of a hundred Earth-ranked magic treasures! Even if he wanted powerful Earth-ranked magic treasures, he would still be able to trade for eight or ten of them.

Even when Baiwei and Fox had been betting frantically against each other, the stakes had only gone up to forty or fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence.

"Northmont Blacktiger really is quite generous." Ning no longer hesitated; he collected the treasures, picked up the jade bottles, and headed for his private training room.

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Within the private room. The jade flask was placed in front of him, and the stopper had been pulled open. Ning sat in the lotus position atop the jade bed, calming himself down. He opened his mouth, and the liquefied elemental essence within the jade bottle instantly began to fly out and be absorbed by Ning's body.

Rumble...

The enormous Zifu Lake within the illusory space of the Zifu Violet Palace. The watersource suddenly began to surge with large amounts of pure elemental energy. The entire Zifu Lake began to swirl about expand in an incomparably rapid pace.

The outer regions of the Zifu Lake were constantly expanding towards every direction. The lake was growing to take up a larger and larger amount of the illusory space, and began to surge towards the deepest recesses of it.

Expanding! It was still expanding! Fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. A hundred. A hundred fifty...Ning didn't hesitate at all, constantly refining and absorbing it all. His base was solid, and his comprehension of the Dao was quite high. His divine soul was very strong, and his sword-heart was lustrous...he absolutely could surge all the way to the early Wanxiang Adept stage if he so chose.

The Zifu Lake continued to expand. It now covered a truly shocking amount of space, and could even be said to have expanded from a 'lake' to a 'sea'. A Zifu Sea!

Three hundred kilograms. Three hundred fifty kilograms!

"Last time, I used forty or so kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. This time, if I use another 360 kilograms, it'll be about enough," Ning mused to himself. According to the [Flowing Watersource], if one refined four hundred kilograms of liquefied elemental essence as a Zifu Disciple, then the foundation that one would establish would be the so-called 'foundation for a Celestial Immortal'. The Manifestation one would later have would also be the best of Manifestations.

"Rumble..." 355 kilograms. 360 kilograms. 365 kilograms.

"Why doesn't my Zifu Lake feel as though it has reached its maximum capacity yet?" Ning was feeling rather puzzled, and he slowed down

the rate at which he was refining liquefied elemental essence as well. Some of the weaker Ki Refining techniques made it so that the practitioner's Zifu Lake would at best be able to withstand fifty kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. But Ning had already been able to withstand more than four hundred kilograms.

370 kilograms...390 kilograms...400 kilograms! Ning opened his eyes, halting his training.

"Last time, I used forty kilograms, and this time, I used four hundred. And yet, my Violet Palace is able to continue to accumulate more?" Ning frowned. Although the [Waterstream Source] hadn't described an upper limit in detail, and there were small differences in each person's capacity, generally speaking, four hundred kilograms should be quite close to the limit.

"I'll halt for now. In two days, when I meet Master, I'll ask him." Ning halted his training.

As Ning was training. In a quite, secluded courtyard within East Stillwater City. Roch was seated in the lotus position on his bed, quietly nourishing his own Zifu Violet Palace. His Violet Palace had been damaged; naturally, he had to carefully cultivate it and heal it.

"Rocky, Rocky, come out, quick!" A frantic voice rang out. "Uncle Ming?" Roch came to an immediate halt, leaving the bed and walking out. "Uncle Ming, what is it?"

Roch pushed the door opened, then saw the bald, middle-aged man, his entire face covered with urgency. Roch felt extremely grateful towards Uncle Ming; at least Uncle Ming had let him stay here this entire time.

"Did you cause trouble or offend someone? A guard of Stillwater Commandery has come in search of you." The bald-headed, middle-aged Uncle Ming was utterly frantic right now.

"Ah?!" Roch shook his head. "I haven't." Uncle Ming hurriedly said,

"Enough talk. Hurry, go see him." Although he had safely secured this quiet, secluded little residence for himself in Stillwater City, compared to the exalted Marquisate of Stillwater...he was like an ant in front of a divine dragon. No – he wasn't even an ant. He was nothing more than a speck of sand.

Roch, his face covered with puzzlement and unease, quickly appeared before the gates of the estate. In front of the gates, there were two armored Zifu Disciple guards, and next to them was a white-robed youth. The two guards were standing behind this white-robed youth.

Upon seeing this, although he felt terror in his heart, Roch also felt a hint of bitterness. "To be able to have guards of the Marquis of Stillwater stand behind me...how long will it be before I can be at this level?" Roch felt sourness in his heart. "I'm not even able to join a school right now. Not a single school wants me. How long will it be before I am able to continue walking down my Immortal path!?"

The tall, skinny, white-robed man, upon seeing Roch, immediately revealed a smile. "Are you Brother Meng Roch?" "Brother...Meng Roch?" Roch stared. The bald Uncle Ming, by his side, was astonished as well. He hurriedly said, "Yes, he's Meng Roch."

The tall, skinny, white-robed man laughed. "My name is Cloudship. I have come on the orders of my master, Ji Ning, to invite you, Brother Meng Roch, to the Black-White College."

Chapter 4 - A Sturdy Base

Meng Roch was completely stunned. Ji Ning? Of course he knew Ji Ning. This was the man who had saved his life. In the Carefree Caverns, he had watched as Ji Ning and another youth were welcomed with great splendor.

"Might I ask who your master, Ji Ning, is?" Roch was somewhat hesitant. Was this the same Ji Ning he knew?

"My master is a formal disciple of the Black-White College." The tall, skinny, white-robed Cloudship laughed. "When he entered the Black-White College, he consecutively defeated multiple senior fellow disciples, and even several Wanxiang Adepts were defeated by him. Brother Meng Roch, my master has invited you to go; will you go?"

"Go? Of course he'll go." The bald Uncle Ming, standing nearby, immediately urged Roch to go. At the same time, he sent Roch mentally, "Rocky, your stroke of good fortune has arrived! That Ji Ning is a monstrous talent and has successfully entered the Black-White College as a formal disciple. The formal disciples of the Black-White College are permitted ten retainer positions, and by the look of things, this youth is one of them. If Ji Ning is inviting you to go...it's very possible that you've received one of those ten positions."

Roch, hearing this mental transmission, was shocked. One of the ten formal retainerships for a formal disciple? The Black-White College was an incomparably exalted place; it was the most powerful school of the entire Stillwater Commandery, and a place where peerless geniuses gathered! Even the retainers of the peerless geniuses, as long as they worked hard and rendered merits unto the school, would have the chance to learn some truly top-tier Ki Refining techniques. This was far better than being a formal disciple of the Thousand Rivers School.

It must be understood that those extremely large schools were divided into outer court disciples, inner court disciples, main

disciples, and the most supreme, core disciples. There were multiple layers of status. In the Black-White College, however, there were only formal disciples and retainers; two layers. Thus, even retainerships were positions that were deeply coveted.

"I'll have a chance to enter the Black-White College?" Roch's heart was filled with all sorts of ideas. "Uh, Brother Meng Roch?" Cloudship said with a touch of urgency. "Ah?!" Roch frantically nodded. "Go, go, of course I'll go."

The Black-White College. Cloudship and Roch had both transformed into streaks of light and were flying in the air. "Look. That is Darknorth Peak, the place where my master, Ji Ning, resides." Cloudship pointed towards a distant, elegant mountain peak.

Ever since he passed through the formal gates of the Black-White College, Roch's mind was filled with all sorts of wild thoughts. He...he had actually entered the Black-White College? The nearby Cloudship really was one of the ten retainers?

Whoosh. The two charged down into the courtyard, quickly landing outside of its gates. The two young gate guards outside the gate all saluted respectfully.

"There is such a thick elemental aura here." After stepping into the courtyard, Roch could sense an incomparably dense elemental aura presence. "The elemental aura in Stillwater City is already dense enough as it is, but this estate actually has a ki-gathering formation that is operating at all times."

Roch was now growing rather nervous. Cloudship was leading him through a hallway, and they soon passed through a door, at which point they arrived at a wide, spacious estate. In the center of this estate, there was a fur-clad youth, who had a peerlessly bewitching beauty by his side, waiting on him.

It was already very late at night. The figure of the fur-clad youth seemed quite blurry and unclear.

"Brother Ji Ning!" Roch, upon seeing the fur-clad youth, couldn't help but blurt these words out. "Rocky!" Ning rose to his feet and walked over.

Roch was rather reserved and nervous right now. This was no longer the same Ji Ning who had come to this city alongside him in search of a school. This was a formal disciple of the Black-White College, the number one school of the entire Stillwater Commandery. And, from what Cloudship said...it seemed as though even in the Black-White College, Ji Ning was quite the standout.

"Don't be nervous," Ning laughed, then asked, "Meng Xin and Meng Jun?" "The two of them both entered schools." Roch said hurriedly, "Both of them are at the early Zifu Stage, and so it was easy for them to join a school. They both entered the Thousand Rivers School."

When saying this, Roch felt a bit of pain in his heart. He had originally wanted to join the same school as Meng Xin, but unfortunately, his foundation had been damaged and not a single school wanted him.

"The Thousand Rivers School?" Ning nodded slowly. "After becoming a formal disciple of the Black-White College, I have ten retainer positions. I don't know if you'd be willing to become a retainer under my control?"

Roch's eyes instantly lit up, and his body began to tremble slightly. "I'm willing!" Roch said hurriedly. Ning laughed. "You'll only be a retainer in name. The two of us will still treat each other as brothers. Oh, right. There's something you must understand...the Black-White College has quite a few internal rules."

"Right." Roch nodded vigorously. What he was afraid of was that he would have no hope for the future. Since he had already joined the Black-White College, a wide route for his Immortal path had just appeared before him. Naturally, he would exert all possible effort to grow increasingly powerful. He walk would ever-farther along the Immortal path, and in his heart, he murmured to himself: "Little Xin."

Wait for me."

"I..." Roch looked at Ning. His eyes were somewhat red. With a thud, he suddenly fell down to his knees, then kowtowed.

"Rocky!" Ning hurriedly went to pull him up. "Brother Ji Ning, you saved my life, and now you've given me my Immortal path back. I, Meng Roch, have nothing to repay you with. So long as you give the order, even if I must climb a mountain of blades or enter a sea of flames, I will charge forward." Roch looked towards Ning.

Ning laughed. "Rise, rise." Right at this moment, the nearby Cloudjade actually grumbled, "Given senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning's talent and power, how can he possibly need your help?"

"Cloudjade." Ning gave the Cloudjade a glance, then instructed, "Go make the arrangements for some food. Rocky and I are going to have a good chat." Compared to his other three retainers, Ning felt more well-disposed towards Roch.

"Yes." Cloudjade turned and immediately departed, but while doing so, she was secretly grumbling to herself. "Yet another hunk of wood!" That Meng Roch fellow, upon entering, had given her just a single glance. She was beginning to question her own seductiveness.

The morning sun rose, spreading its dim light throughout the entire Black-White College. Everything appeared so dreamlike and illusory. Ning was atop a flying boat. Transforming into a streak of light, he flew out of Darknorth Peak. Soon afterwards, he arrived in the air above the mountain of his master, Immortal Diancai.

"Master." Ning landed in the courtyard, then called out respectfully. "Come in." Immortal Diancai's voice transmitted to him from outside. Ning immediately entered, and the servants at the gate naturally did not bar his path.

Within the hall. The black-robed, black-haired Immortal Diancai was seated in the lotus position atop a 'bed' of clouds. He looked at Ning,

and he felt as though the more he saw him, the more satisfied he was with him. Being able to teach an extremely talented disciple made him feel quite successful as well. Immortal Diancai said in a calm voice, "Ji Ning, how did your three days of meditation go?"

"Your disciple has made considerable gains!" Ning said respectfully. "Mm." Immortal Diancai nodded slowly, then narrowed his eyes. "Previously, Headmaster Jadesea has already informed you regarding the Great Dao of the Sword, yes?"

Ning nodded. "Yes."

"The sword," Immortal Diancai said slowly, "Is a killing tool. It is also the tool which we Immortal cultivators will use in our ascent to the peak, in slaughtering all who would impede our path."

"The Dao of the Sword is a type of combat-focused Dao. Sword Immortals, in turn, are Immortal cultivators that are extremely skilled in combat." Immortal Diancai laughed as he looked at Ning. "Do you know...what the Dao of the Sword is?"

Ning was speechless. And then, lost, he shook his head. He had just entered the earliest realm of comprehension regarding this Grand Dao of the Sword, and knew almost nothing at all about it. What is the Dao of the Sword? He really didn't know how to respond to such a question.

"Some Daos are Daos involving the mysteries underpinning the way in which the world operates. For example, your Rainwater Dao. The Dao of Freezing Ice. The Dao of Mystic Ice. And more! All of them are Daos regarding the profundities of the natural world."

Ning nodded. These were, indeed, all natural Daos. The techniques one came up with after comprehending these Daos would all be referred to as 'arts'.

"Arts are a way to apply the Daos. The 'sword arts' are that which you generally use when wielding the sword. To reach a level in the sword

arts which is so high as to be a Dao of its own....that is what the Dao of the Sword is!" Immortal Diancai looked at Ning. "Thus, the Dao of the Sword is actually a technical Dao, a Dao of applying certain techniques and knacks."

Ning now understood.

"Not just the Dao of the Sword; the Dao of Taiji is the same. Taiji also involves the application of certain skills and techniques. Taiji, in turn, is also a Grand Dao."

"When, for example, you began to gain insights into water and fire, you might be able to apply the insights you gained into fire and water through the Dao of Taiji, and the power will exponentially increase." Immortal Diancai looked at Ji Ning. "The Dao of the Sword which you have chosen as your path, in turns, results in you applying and executing the insights you have gained into the Dao of the Sword."

Ning nodded his head in understanding. Taiji? Dao of the Sword? The application of a Dao?

"Regardless of whether it is Taiji or the Dao of the Sword, these are all extremely, unfathomably profound Grand Daos. They are extremely hard to comprehend." Immortal Diancai sighed. "For example, the Dao of the Sword requires one to comprehend and develop one's sword-heart. The Dao of Taiji also requires one to comprehend and develop one's Taiji-heart. Both are extremely difficult tasks. But upon embarking on this Grand Dao, one's future potential will be limitless."

Ning nodded as he listened.

"Remember!" Immortal Diancai looked at Ning, then said solemnly, "As a Sword Immortal, you must have a supremely sincere heart! Sincere to the sword, and sincere to your own heart. Do you understand?"

Ning nodded solemnly.

"You must always reflect on your actions, and hone your sword-heart. Do not let any dust alight on your sword-heart. You must know, a truly sincere heart is always lustrous!" Immortal Diancai looked at Ji Ning. "You must firmly engrave these words of mine into your heart."

"Yes. Your disciple will memorize them carefully, and will never dare to forget them," Ning replied.

"Mm." Immortal Diancai waved his hand, retrieving a leather scroll which he handed to Ning. Ning accepted it, slightly puzzled. "During these three days," Immortal Diancai said, "I've been carefully considering your earlier performance during the Dao Debates. In the end, I selected thirty-six sword arts manuals for you. Afterwards, when you go to the Dao Repository Vault, go trade for the thirty-six manuals recorded on this leather scroll."

"Thirty six?" Ning was stunned. "I am to go trade for them?" Although he had just embarked on the path of the Dao of the Sword and had received two thousand black-white pellets...thirty-six sword arts manuals?!

"Don't worry. These are all Earth-ranked or Heaven-ranked sword arts. In addition, I'm only having you trade for the first scrolls. In total, they will only cost six hundred black-white pellets," Immortal Diancai said. Only now did Ning let out a sigh of relief. Six hundred black-white pellets was indeed not too great a cost for him.

"Although they are only Earth-ranked and Heaven-ranked sword arts, and although you are only trading for their first scrolls, they will be enough for you to use at the Zifu Disciple level and at the Wanxiang Adept level," Immortal Diancai said. "These are all sword arts which, if placed within some lesser tribes, would be considered peerless sword arts that serve as the foundation for the entire tribe. Carefully read through these sword arts."

"The first reason I am having you peruse so many different sword arts is to raise your level of insights into the Dao of the Sword," Immortal Diancai said with a a laugh. "Second is, the more you see and the more you study, the greater your experiences and understanding will be. In the future, when you are adventuring and battling in the outside world, you'll be able to advance more quickly and benefit from this study."

"Understood," Ning acknowledged.

"Go, then, to the Dao Repository Vault. After today, one day each month, you may come visit me and ask me some of the questions which have mystified you in your day-to-day training," Immortal Diancai said. "Once I feel your foundation is solid enough, then I'll permit you to leave the Black-White College and go temper yourself in wandering the outside world. If you stay forever under the protection of your elders, there is no way you'll be able to become a true Immortal. Only when you live beneath the pounding of the rain and the howling of the wind, when you are tempered by life-and-death battles, will you be reborn into a mighty Immortal who does not fear the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations.

Ning nodded. "Understood."

Chapter 5 – [Soulshaker Art]

“Master, your disciple has one more issue.” Ji Ning was still thinking about how, even after using four hundred kilograms of liquefied elemental essence, his Zifu Lake hadn’t reached its limit.

“Speak,” Immortal Diancai said.

Ning hurriedly said, “Your disciple has trained in the [Flowing Watersource]. In total, I’ve used 405 kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. According to the [Flowing Watersource], 400 kilograms is enough to establish a ‘foundation for a Celestial Immortal’, and if one tries to refine even more, one will quickly reach a limit. However, my Zifu Violet Palace has not yet reached the limit. Why is this?”

“Oh?” Immortal Diancai laughed. “Hahaha, most Immortal practitioners are vexed by their Violet Palace’s not being able to absorb enough elemental ki and their foundation not being sufficiently stable. But you are complaining about your Violet Palace being able to absorb too much?”

“That’s not it,” Ning said hurriedly. “I just am puzzled, and I don’t understand why I am unique.”

Immortal Diancai laughed. “This is because your body is the body of a Fiendgod! It would be one thing if you had an ordinary Fiendgod body, but yours is one which has been created by the legendary, number one Fiendgod Body Refining Technique, the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. It is a truly perfect Fiendgod body, no weaker than that of a mighty Fiendgod who was born from the natural world. It only makes sense that the Zifu Lake within your Fiendgod body is able to withstand a tremendous amount of elemental ki.

“Oh.” Ning now understood.

“Actually, the better a Ki Refining technique is, the more stable one’s foundation will be. Perhaps you’ll spend a bit more time at the Zifu

or the Wanxiang levels, but the further you go, the easier your life will be," Immortal Diancai said. "Also; there are some other techniques that are also Immortal-ranked, but are even better than even the [Flowing Watersource], which allows one to use five hundred kilograms of liquefied elemental essence at the Zifu Disciple stage. The more powerful a technique, the more elemental ki it is able to control." Immortal Diancai looked at Ning. "You should be happy."

"Your disciple understands," Ning said. "However, how much liquefied elemental essence does your disciple need to use before advancing to the Wanxiang level?"

Immortal Diancai pondered for a moment, then said, "Disciples who train in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] who also train in the [Flowing Watersource] are indeed quite rare...let me think about it. Mm. Mmm. Yes, I imagine you will need around eight hundred to one thousand kilograms or so."

Ning sucked in a cold breath upon hearing this. Immortal Diancai looked at Ning. "The [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] is the number one Fiendgod Body Refining Technique in the world. You must practice it with diligence as well."

"Alright." Ning nodded, then added, "Then I'll go to the Dao Repository Vault now." Immortal Diancai nodded. "Go," he said, then closed his eyes.

Ning depart. As he left the room, he boarded his flying boat and soared into the skies, heading to the Dao Repository Vault.

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The Dao Repository Vault. Ning headed straight for the second floor, that of the 'arts'. "Originally, I had 200 black-white pellets left over. From the Dao Debates, I gained 600 black-white pellets. After embarking on the path of the Sword Immortal, the College bestowed me with two thousand black-white pellets. I have a total of 2800

black-white pellets." Ning carefully searched through the countless books placed on the bookstacks. He was searching for the thirty-six sword arts manuals which his master had instructed him to find on that leather scroll.

"Quite cheap. This one is only thirty black-white pellets. Mm, this one is just ten. Ouch, this one is actually a hundred." Ning moved as fast as the wind, and his eyes scanned the books as fast as lightning. He moved past large stacks of sword arts manuals, quickly picking out all thirty-six books.

The cheapest of these thirty-six books was just ten black-white pellets, while the most expensive was a hundred. However, these were all seemingly random, disjointed manuals; there were strange sword arts, tyrannical sword arts, fast sword arts...

"Out of a sea of sword arts manuals, Master actually chose these thirty-six after considering things for me. From this, one can imagine how many sword arts manuals Master has read." Ning sighed to himself in amazement.

Clearly, to become a truly mighty Sword Immortal, it was also important to read many sword arts manuals. "Not bad. This sword art is even more suited to me than the [Duality Azureflame Sword]."
As Ning flipped through the books, his eyes instantly began to light up.

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After choosing the thirty-six books, Ning came to another table. Atop the table, there were five abridged books. They were: [Heavenly Transformation], [Divine Thunderbolt Eye], [Myriad Hibernating Venoms], [Three Heads, Six Arms], and [Eye of the Luminous Heart].

"Divine abilities." Ning pondered to himself. "I only have 2200 black-white pellets left. Should I choose a divine ability, or a skill for my divine sense." Divine sense techniques were even rarer than divine abilities; the Black-White College only had three books. The

[Soulshaker Art], the [Soulcharmer Art], and the [Soulslayer Art].

Divine abilities and divine sense techniques were equally attractive to Ning. He wanted both. "If only I could choose whatever I wanted..." Ning gritted his teeth.

He gave one last, regretful glance to those five abridged books, then turned and left, moving directly towards the other table filled with divine sense techniques. Atop the table, there were a total of three golden books.

Not hesitating at all, Ning picked up one of the golden books, then straightforwardly departed the Dao Repository Vault.

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Upon Ning leaving the Vault, the tall, muscular, armored Dao-Protector looked at him. "You've made your choice?"

"Yes. Take it." Ning handed it over, and when he did, he couldn't help but turn to look back at the Dao Repository Vault. His divine abilities! He really, really wanted to acquire a few divine abilities.

For example, that [Eye of the Luminous Heart] also had a side-effect pertaining to divine sense, and was extremely mysterious and profound. But the cost of the first scroll alone was five thousand black-white pellets. For the [Divine Thunderbolt Eye], one could immediately open a third, divine eye which was able to draw in and store the lightning and thunder of the world. With but a thought, one could release thunderbolts from that divine eye! Its power was truly terrifying.

"For now...I can't have my cake and eat it as well," Ning sighed to himself. "I already have a divine ability, the [Starseizing Hand], which is vastly superior to these divine abilities. These divine abilities, as far as I'm concerned, are just supporting arts that can make up for some of my weaknesses. They will not, however, noticeably increase my real power."

"This [Soulshaker Art], however, will allow me to be able to gain yet another killer technique in a short period of time," Ning mused to himself.

The [Soulshaker Art]'s power was not related to one's divine power or elemental ki; it relied on the strength of one's divine will! The stronger the divine will, the more powerful the [Soulshaker Art] would be. His divine will was at the level of a Primal Daoist's by now, and with the [Nuwa Painting], his divine soul would only continue to grow in strength. Naturally, he had to learn a divine sense technique.

"You didn't choose a divine ability?" The Dao-Protector, after looking at Ning's choices, was rather amazed. "Apprentice-Nephew Ji Ning, this [Soulshaker Art] only requires a divine will to be used, but only other Wanxiang Adepts will have a divine will as well. At most, you'll be able to slightly impact other Wanxiang Adepts. You train in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]; it's best if you choose a divine ability."

Ning laughed. This Dao-Protector had no idea that his divine soul was already at the 'divine sense' level. "This is my choice," Ning said.

"Your decision." The Dao-Protector had only chosen to say a few extra words for Ning's benefit. Since Ning insisted, he naturally wouldn't say anything else.

"The [Soulshaker Art] requires 2000 black-white pellets, while the others need exactly 600." The Dao-Protector looked at Ning. "I'll destroy the restrictive spells around these sword arts manuals, and I'll also go acquire the actual copies of the [Soulshaker Art] and the Heaven-ranked sword techniques for you."

.....

Soon, Ning paid the 2600 black-white pellets, then departed with the thirty-six sword arts manuals as well as the [Soulshaker Art] and returned to his Darknorth Peak.

Upon returning to Darknorth Peak, Ning felt quite the itchy feeling in his heart. He gave a few instructions, ordering that he was not to be disturbed unless there was something important. And then, he went directly into his private training room.

"Back to the training room again." Cloudjade stared at Ning, chewing on her lips. There was a hint of sadness in her eyes. "He won't talk to me at all."

The nearby Roch cast Cloudjade a glance, laughing inwardly. How could he not tell that Cloudjade had been hoping to seduce Ning? "What a pity. Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning's Dao-heart is incomparably firm. How could a vixen like you possibly move him?"

Within the private room. Ning sat down in the lotus position, immediately beginning to flip through the [Soulshaker Art]'s complete manual. The complete manual to the [Soulshaker Art] wasn't too thick. After beginning to carefully read through it, Ning started to understand...the so-called [Soulshaker Art] was just an extremely unique way of applying the divine will. This was a technical manual, but its value was comparable to a divine ability.

"The [Soulshaker Art]?" Ning closed his eyes, beginning to ponder on what he had read. Rumble...Ning's powerful divine will began to spread out, filling the entire private room, and he began to test it over and over.

Failure. Failure. Failure. Ning's repeated failures didn't cause him to feel the slightest bit dispirited. Each time, he would realize what his mistake was, and each time, he would perform better than the last.

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In the blink of an eye, more than half a month passed with Ning staying within the training room. Because Ning had ordered his servants long ago that he was not to be disturbed unless there was something critically important, for this period of time, things were quite calm and quiet.

Within Ning's sea of consciousness, there was a miniature Ji Ning, seated in the lotus position. This was Ning's 'divine soul'. The divine soul sat there in the lotus position, a runic seal repeatedly appearing and disappearing over his chest.

"Whoosh!" The azure seal managed to remain alive for a few instants, but then was extinguished once more.

Ning calmly absorbed the lessons of this failure, then tried again. "Whoosh!" Instantly, a queer azure seal once more appeared in front of the chest of Ning's divine soul. This seal, at first glance, appeared to be some sort of script, but it was neither a Fiendgod character, nor a character from any language he was aware of. When seeing this azure rune, one felt as though a violent wave was slamming against the shore.

"Go." Ning willed his divine soul to release his tremendously powerful divine will, which came out through that azure runic seal. The divine will which was released wasn't as dispersed as it was before; rather, it was a wave that was folded together in layers. His divine sense spread out like waves in every direction, constantly rolling forth without end. One could imagine how, if Ning encountered a living creature with a soul, these turbid waves of divine will would instantly smash down against the enemy's soul, just like a wave smashing down upon a shore.

"At last, I've finally managed to just barely manifest the 'Soulshaker Rune'." Ning opened his eyes, revealing a hint of a smile. "However, I'm still quite far off from the true, perfect Soulshaker Rune as mentioned in the book."

Relaxed, Ning left the private room. By the time he arrived in the outer courtyard, he saw that it was late at night. Outside was a sea of sparkling stars in the night sky. Ning raised his head, staring at the sea of stars, then laughed. "In the upcoming period of time, what I'll need to do is spend quite some time meditating on the Dao and on sword arts here at the Black-White College. Only when Master nods in approval shall I go out and temper myself through adventuring."

.....

Time flowed on like water. Ji Ning and Mu Northson, the two new disciples of the Black-White College, lived lives that were peaceful and yet meaningful. They focused on comprehending the Dao, on analyzing sword arts and the Dao of Constructs, and unconsciously, their power grew greater and greater. The two of them had been like two pieces of unpolished jade, but the Black-White College slowly carved and shaped them, letting them reveal their true luster.

In the blink of an eye, more than three years passed. It was the height of summer now. This year, Ning turned twenty years old.

Chapter 6 – Three Years Later

This midsummer dawn was uncommonly cool. Ji Ning, still clad in his black furs, walked out from the estate atop Darknorth Peak.

“Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” Meng Roch, who had grown only more muscular and tanned, immediately greeted him with respect.

“Rocky, prepare some food for me. Same as what we’ve done in the past.” Ning laughed as he gave some instructions. In the past three years, Northmont Baiwei had delivered two more retainers, and so he now had a total of six under his control. He was now quite familiar with all six of them, but he still trusted Roch the most.

Because Roch had damaged his ki foundation in the past, upon entering the Black-White College, he began to train as a Fiendgod as well, and his skin had darkened as a result. “Yes, senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning,” Roch said, immediately departing.

“Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, you came out.” A beautiful figure walked over from afar. It was Cloudjade. Behind her was a black-robed youth; this was one of the six retainers under Ning’s command, Weifang.

Cloudjade’s eyes were as bright as jewels. After having been in the Black-White College for so long, her aura had improved as well, and she now had an additional hint of otherworldliness about her. “You were in closed-door meditation for so long this time, senior apprentice-brother. It was almost a month.”

She stared at Ning with a gaze that was quite scorching. Although her horizons had been expanded during her time at the Black-White College...in her eyes, Ji Ning was still the most brilliant star of them all. Three years had passed, and compared to three years ago, Ning’s aura had only grown more simple and pure; he was like a youth who lived a rustic life in the mountain wilderness.

But Cloudjade understood that her senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning

was now far more powerful than he had been three years ago. There were now extremely few people who were willing to engage in a discourse on the Dao with Ning at the Dao Debate Palace, and quite a few secretly claimed that Ning must surely be a reincarnated Immortal. From this, one could tell how monstrous Ning's performance had been.

"Each time I come out of seclusion, I'll see you," Ning laughed. "Cloudjade, you need to calm your heart and focus on training as well. Look at Weifang..he arrived after you did, but he's the most powerful of the six of you."

"Senior apprentice-brother, you praise me over-much," the black-robed youth, Weifang, immediately said with respect. "Compared to you, senior apprentice-brother, I am countless tens of thousands of kilometers beneath you."

"I've already worked quite hard," Cloudjade said. But Ning only shook his head. "Your talent is excellent, but your Dao-heart is somewhat lacking." Cloudjade just rolled her eyes.

Ning secretly shook his head. When Cloudjade had first joined the school, she had wanted to seduce him. After realizing that there was no hope...although she was still very respectful to Ning, she started to begin to work on seducing the other senior apprentice-brothers of the College.

"She walks the path of Immortal cultivation, but instead of calming her mind and focusing on training, the only thing on her mind is becoming Dao-Companions with powerful Immortal practitioners. Jeeze!" Ning felt quite resigned about this as well.

He understood everything quite clearly. Cloudjade, by nature, wasn't a bad person. Of his six main retainers, the person Ning trusted the most was Roch, and the person he trusted the second most was Cloudjade. As for the other four, although they were extremely respectful towards him, Ning could sense that all four of them were hugely ambitious, and so he had to be careful in the amount of trust

he showed them.

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Ning sat there, sipping some stewed rice porridge that contained natural elemental energies within it while eating some delicacies. His mood was quite good to begin with, and it was improving further and further. Next to him was the Whitewater Hound who just lay there, looking at Ning. He sent mentally to Ning, "Ning, son; you seem to be in quite a good mood."

"Right. I was in closed-door training for nearly a month, but I've finally comprehended the second stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]!" Ning looked at his Uncle White, his face covered in smiles.

"You've comprehended it?" The Whitewater Hound instantly revealed a look of surprise and delight as well. Over the past three years... Ning had an Immortal guiding him, the sword arts manuals of the Dao Repository Vault to peruse over, and the complete [Three-Foot Sword] in his mind, as well as the sword-intent which senior Northwalker had transmitted to him.

Ning's rate of improvement had naturally been astonishingly fast. In the past, he had never had a truly formidable teacher. Even his father and the others, when faced with Ning's monstrous talent, felt that they were not quite good enough to teach him.

With Immortal Diancai guiding Ning, Ning felt incomparable joy, and his rate of improvement had reached an astonishing level. However, he had never been able to completely comprehend the second stance of the [Three-Foot Sword].

"Three years. You've finally mastered it." The Whitewater Hound rose to his feet, feeling excited for Ning.

"With this sword art mastered, I now have the confidence to go spar with Master once again," Ning said with a laugh. "Perhaps this time, Master will acknowledge my growth and permit me to go out

wandering." Without his master's permission, Ning was not to leave the school.

Logically speaking, given his current level of power, Ning should've been able to go out wandering long ago. However, given how incredible Ning's talent was, Immortal Diancai's requirements for Ning were similarly incredible! By now...Ning had sparred against his master numerous times, and although he had improved greatly each time, he had never received his master's permission.

"Go," the Whitewater Hound mentally sent to him with a laugh. "If you go, I'll be able to accompany you in wandering. In the past, I went out adventuring with your father as well. When I think about it, my blood starts to pump."

By borrowing from Ning's liquefied elemental essence, the Whitewater Hound had naturally reached the peak Zifu stage long ago. Ning had wanted to trade for some powerful secret arts on behalf of the Whitewater Hound, but the Whitewater Hound didn't need it. All he accepted was some formation techniques to analyze, which Ning had spent 200 black-white pellets on. Because it took quite a long period of time to analyze formation techniques, the price of such techniques was actually quite low. Ning had spent 600 black-white pellets for his thirty-six sword arts manuals, but as for the formation manuals...he had spent merely 200 black-white pellets for 91 books.

The [Nine Scrolls on Formations] which that Loose Immortal had left behind was incomparably broad and profound. This was the complete legacy of a Loose Immortal. As a Godbeast, the Whitewater Hound had focused on analyzing formations, even when he had been accompanying Ning's father. Acquiring the Nine Scrolls was already a case of him being akin to a tiger who had gained wings. Now that he also gained so many formations manuals from the Black-White College, he naturally had made enormous improvements. And, every so often, the Whitewater Hound would even go to the Black-White College to listen to some Primal Daoists or

even to some of the Immortals expound on the Dao.

"I'll go, then." Ning rose to his feet. "Go." The Whitewater Hound watched as Ning left. Ning boarded his flying boat, then quickly disappeared into the distant horizons.

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Ning stood there atop his boat in midair, staring downwards. Soon, he arrived at the residence of his master, Immortal Diancai.

Whoosh. Ning landed in front of the estate, and the gate guards smiled towards Ning. Ning strode directly inwards without waiting. Immortal Diancai had given the order long ago that Ning was to be permitted to enter directly, without any need to report his arrival.

Within the hall. The black-haired, black-robed Immortal Diancai was seated in the lotus position on his jade bed. It seemed as though the passage of three years had not affected Ning's master at all.

"Today is not the first of the month. Have you come here to spar with me once more?" Immortal Diancai looked at his beloved disciple. Over the course of the past three years, he had come to love his sole disciple even more, to the point where his affection for Ning was even greater than his affection for the descendants of his clan.

"Yes." Ning looked at his master. A sword-light that seemed almost physical had appeared within Ning's eyes, and his entire person slowly began to radiate a terrifying sword-intent. His sword-intent surged through the heavens!

"It does seem that you've improved a bit." Immortal Diancai nodded. "Come, then. Attack me."

"Be careful, Master." A Darknorth sword appeared out of nowhere, and he gripped it with two hands. Swish! Ning transformed into a blurry, rapidly moving figure, and the sharp sword in his hand seemed to have turned into a ghostly image. His speed had reached an extremely high level, and he instantly pierced the sword towards

Immortal Diancai, seated on the jade bed.

Immortal Diancai, seated on the jade bed, leisurely stretched out his fingers, forming a sword-finger. With a light tap, a streak of sword-light instantly arced out. "Clash." This solitary streak of sword-light repeatedly clashed in mid-air multiple times with Ning's sword-shadow. Ning's sword moved about like a ghost, but although this solitary streak of sword-light was in an arc, its position also fluctuated unpredictably.

"Hmph." Ning's sword-light changed, becoming domineering and tyrannical. Bang! Instantly, the surrounding area was submerged into a sea of fire, and Ning's sword became one of the flames within it, incomparably valiant as it chopped directly towards Immortal Diancai. This sword attack of Ji Ning's...had already vastly surpassed the [Thunderflame Sword]'s level, and most likely even the person who had originally developed the [Thunderflame Sword] was no match for the current Ning in terms of the Dao of the Sword.

"Extinguish." Immortal Diancai revealed a hint of a smile as well. With a gentle tap of the fingers, a sword-light flew out from his fingertips which instantly transformed into thousands of silken lines. These silken lines criss-crossed each other, seeming to form a giant net. This giant net of sword-light howled forward, quickly surrounding and wrapping around Ning's pyroclasm of sword-light.

"Heartless Waterflame!" Ning revealed a smile as well. Instantly, the surrounding area changed yet again. One side was filled with blazing flames, while the other side was filled with boundless rainwater. In one of Ning's hands was a blazing sword of fire, while in the other was a sword of rain.

Ning's entire figure radiated an invincible aura as he charged directly towards that net of sword-light, and the twin swords in his hands spun in a vortex together as he did so.

"Bang!" The sword-lights of fire and water clashed head on with the net of sword-light in a giant explosion...and both shattered apart.

"This latest 'Heartless Waterflame' finally seems to have a bit of flavor to it." Immortal Diancai pointed with his sword-finger once more. Swish! A sharp sword-light attacked with incomparably astonishing speed towards Ning, while at the same time, Immortal Diancai pointed again, and again...one streak of sword-light after another shot out, all moving at incomprehensible speeds.

"Last time, he was defeated by this technique, and his body was filled with quite a few bloody holes. I wonder if he'll be able to block it this time." Immortal Diancai's eyes were filled with anticipation.

Ning no longer revealed an incomparably relaxed smile on his face as he had before. Instead, his eyes lit up, and he seemed to suddenly explode with power.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! The twin swords in Ning's hands began to move. Suddenly, in the area around Ning, an enormous millstone of fire and water appeared. Fire and water were contradictory, opposite types of elemental energy, but they twisted past each other here to form this enormous millstone. In the very center of the millstone, where the water and fire clashed with each other, a terrifying wind force arose. This tri-colored millstone revolved around Ning, and where Ning's sword light flashed past, an incomparably powerful wind arose as well!

Fast! Faster than fast! Chop! Chop! Chop! Ning consecutively chopped and extinguished the sword-lights created by his master's finger-taps. The bedstone of fire and water revolved around him, while the gale raged around his body. Ning's sword flashed out like lightning as well, each time striking at the weaknesses on the side of those flashes of sword-light, rather than taking them head on.

"Faster. Move a little faster." Immortal Diancai began to tap with his fingers even faster, and the sword-light which appeared in the air grew increasingly ferocious as they shot towards Ning. Ning, ensconced within that giant millstone of fire and water, wielded his sword at an inconceivably fast speed, and continued to chop apart and extinguish those flashes of sword-light.

"Go, then!" Immortal Diancai gently flicked his fingers, and the thousand rays of sword-light that were in midair suddenly seemed to transform into brilliant stars. They resonated amongst each other, thundering forth with a unified attack that blasted towards Ning at the same time.

Chapter 7 – Master and Disciple, Pre-Departure

“Not good.” Last time, when Ji Ning had sparred with his master, his master hadn’t used this technique. Faced with the sudden attack of a thousand star-like bursts of sword-light, Ning knew that his ‘Tripartite Millstone’ wouldn’t be able to withstand the assault.

The sword-intent radiating from Ning’s body compressed itself to the utmost. “Pierce!” Ning’s sword suddenly shout out. It was as though even if there were infinitely great impediments standing in front of Ning and wrapping around him, as though ropes were bound about him, causing his sword to frantically struggle to pierce forward. It moved incomparably slowly...and yet, in reality, that was just a misperception, as the sword itself had reached an incredibly great speed.

Swish! The sword shot out like a meteor! It tore through the boundless darkness, ripped through all impediments, and completely shattered the thousand-plus bolts of starry sword-light. With part of it having been destroyed, all the surrounding bolts of starry sword-light vanished and dispersed.

As for Ning himself, moving like a phantom, he charged towards his master, the sword in his right hand having stabbed forward and broken those thousand stars of sword-light. At the same time, the sword in his left hand had already stabbed towards his master, Immortal Diancai.

“Break!” Immortal Diancai revealed a smile as he rapped out this word. A formless sword energy instantly clashed with Ning’s Darknorth sword. It was not only powerful, but backed with a seemingly endless momentum of energy, causing Ning to be pushed back many meters before finding his footing.

Immortal Diancai, still seated on his jade bed, nodded slowly. “The ‘Manifold Thistlethorns’. You’ve finally comprehended this technique.”

This was the attack Ning had just demonstrated, the second stance of the [Three-Foot Sword] – ‘Manifold Thistlethorns’. This technique represented the highest level of comprehension regarding the Dao of the Sword which Ning had ever reached. “Thanks to your guidance, Master,” Ning said respectfully, “Your foolish disciple was able to finally comprehend this technique today.”

“Hahaha. You only spend three years to comprehend the second stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]. If this performance of yours is to be described as ‘foolish’, then your master would have to be described with the word ‘idiot’,” Immortal Diancai laughed. “After I comprehended the first stance, it took me ten years before I comprehended the second one. Your talent is, indeed, far superior to mine.”

Ning said respectfully, “My talent is at most comparable to those reincarnated Immortals. Our Black-White College has had reincarnated Immortals in every generation, and even in the current Black-White College, there are several reincarnated Immortals. You, Master, despite not being a reincarnated Immortal, are able to surpass those who are in power, and are universally acknowledged as being the Immortal with the greatest chances of becoming a Celestial Immortal. Similarly, the Sloppy Daoist is also the undisputed number one figure amongst the third generation disciples.”

Immortal Diancai nodded in satisfaction. “It is good that you are always humble and vigilant. Now...you can leave the school and go out wandering.” Immortal Diancai smiled as he looked at Ning. Finally, he had said these words.

“I can go out adventuring now?” Ning couldn’t help but feel excitement in his heart. Each time he had made a breakthrough, he felt that he should be able to receive his master’s acknowledgment, but in reality...he had been disappointed time and time again. For example, when he had reached the Dao Domain level in the ‘Dao of the Inferno’, or when he had developed increasingly powerful sword

arts, including his own perfected and highly suitable 'Tripartite Millstone Sword' attack, he had felt incomparably proud and vigorous.

However, his master had not nodded in approval. Not until today! After he had mastered the second stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], he had finally gained his master's acknowledgment. Finally, he was going to be able to wander the outside world, filled with both dangers and opportunities. The vast, endless outside world.

"Ji Ning." Immortal Diancai looked at Ning. "Master." Ning tamped down the excitement in his heart.

"Accept these two protective items." Two items appeared out of nowhere in Immortal Diancai's hands. One appeared to be a brooch which was covered with carvings that appeared to be of a beautiful Immortal palace. As for the other, it was a fiery red jade bottle. "This pendant is something I personally created. After refining it, carry it with you at all times. With but a thought, you can release the sword-energy within it to protect yourself. With that sword-energy protecting you...you will be able to resist the attack of even a Loose Immortal or an Earth Immortal for one breath's worth of time."

"As for this jade bottle...you must be extremely careful within it. Within it there is a single 'Polar Aurora Thunderflame Pearl'. Its power is tremendous. Once you throw it out, it does not distinguish between friend or foe. Everything within a radius of thirty meters will be reduced into powder. Even Loose Immortals or Earth Immortals will most likely be heavily wounded, while almost all Primal Daoists will perish."

"Of these two items, one is meant for offense, while the other is meant for defense. However, each can only be used a single time. Thus, you must consider carefully when to use them." Immortal Diancai looked at Ning, his eyes filled with anticipation and solemnity.

As the saying went, when a child travelled a thousand kilometers

away, the parents would be filled with worry. He only had a single disciple under his tutelage, and this disciple was about to go adventuring in distant lands...as his master, how could Immortal Diancai not be worried? After all, no matter how powerful a peerless genius was, if he didn't have the chance to grow in power, he still wouldn't be able to overcome some older, more powerful figures. For example, if Ning encountered a Primal Daoist opponent, he would still be crushed without being able to fight back at all.

"You must remember to be cautious in all matters. Think thrice before acting...but once you decide, act decisively." Immortal Diancai looked at Ning. Suddenly, Ning felt an aching feeling in his heart. That look...

In the past, when he had left West Prefecture City to go adventuring, his father and his mother had looked at him with those exact same eyes. Eyes filled with worry, but also anticipation. Although his master was powerful, he couldn't take on all the risks of life for his disciple. Every disciple needed to truly test themselves...only then would they be successful.'

"Don't worry, Master. Your disciple will definitely be careful," Ning said hurriedly.

"The only things which Master can give you are these two items." Immortal Diancai looked towards Ning. "Remember. Everything else will be up to your own efforts."

"Alright." Ning accepted the items respectfully. These two items were both truly priceless items; in fact, they vastly outstripped the value of the presents which Northmont Blacktiger had given.

The defensive pendant was able to defend against the attack of an Earth Immortal or Loose Immortal for a full breath's worth of time. In a life-and-death attack, death would sometimes come in an instant. To Immortal practitioners, the amount of time one needed to take a breath was enough for them to fly countless kilometers away.

As for the Polaris Aurora Thunderflame Pearl, it could badly injure Immortals and kill almost all Primal Daoists. It could be described as a true killer item.

"When next you return to the College, come seek me out. You can go now." Immortal Diancai waved his hand as he spoke, then closed his eyes.

"Alright." Ning bowed, then immediately departed.

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After leaving his master, Ning boarded his flying boat and flew into the skies. He felt an aching feeling in his heart. He could sense that his master's heart was filled with concern for him, and that concern was not unreasonable; the path of an Immortal practitioner was a path which was against the heavens, a path that was filled with pitfalls. Even the heavens themselves would, intentionally or unintentionally, create numerous traps and barriers for Immortal practitioners.

Far too many disciples of the Black-White College had died in the outside world. It must be understood...so long as the disciples of the Black-White College did not perish, the vast majority would become Primal Daoists! But there were hundreds of third generation disciples, while only thirty or so second generation Primal Daoists. Why? The reason was...the rest died!

They died while testing themselves, while roaming the outside world! As the saying goes, if jade isn't polished, it cannot be carved, but during the carving process, how many pieces of unpolished jade would end up being destroyed? The 'jade-carving knife' of the 'tempering' process was truly a vicious one. To embark on the path of Immortals...this was embarking on a path that was filled with countless pitfalls and snares.

"Master. I will definitely return to you alive," Ning murmured in his heart. And then, his flying boat went directly to the residence of his

junior apprentice-brother, the mountain peak of Mu Northson.

Twinwood Peak. Ning flew into the air above it, then called out directly, "Junior apprentice-brother Northson." His voice echoed out in waves, reaching the estate below. Soon, a figure appeared in the courtyard below, who quickly called back, "Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, quick, come in."

Ning descended to the ground. Compared to three years ago, although Northson still had the appearance of a immature youth, in terms of both power and Dao-heart, he had grown considerably. After all, he had been able to join the Black-White College at the age of fourteen, and had been able to spend so much time in meditation in front of the Black-White Diagram...his talent was, without question, extremely high.

The reason why he had lost at the Dao Debates was because he was simply too young, and because he hadn't had as great a stroke of karmic luck as Ning had, who had acquired the underwater estate.

"Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, why did you decide to come here to my place?" Northson laughed. "Normally, it's quite rare to see you come out."

"I was just approved by master to go out adventuring in the outside world." Ning revealed a smile.

"Really? Wonderful!" Northson instantly began to celebrate. "I've waited for this day for over a year now. Two years after I joined, my master gave me permission to go out adventuring. You are so strong, senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, but you spent three years in training. Immortal Diancai really is extremely exacting towards you."

Ning laughed. After receiving the nod from his master, Daoist Jadefine, Northson had immediately come to find Ning. But Ning hadn't been able to leave...and so Northson had tamped down his impatience. He didn't want to go out wandering all by his lonely self; he wanted a companion. If two brothers went out adventuring

together, at least they wouldn't be too lonely.

And so, he had waited...all the way until today.

"Oh, oh, I need to go to my master and bid her farewell," Northson said hurriedly. "Go, go," Ning said. "Your master dotes on you so much, you really should have a good chat with her before leaving."

The master of Northson, Daoist Jadefine, did indeed dote on him. First of all, the entire Black-White College had very, very few people who focused on the Dao of Constructs; it was rare for her to find such a wonderful disciple. And secondly, Daoist Jadefine had been stuck at the Primal Daoist level for many years. The assaults of the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations had grown increasingly difficult for her to withstand, and she was close to her limit. A person close to the end of her years, upon suddenly taking on such a talented disciple who was so young...Daoist Jadefine naturally doted fiercely on this disciple of hers.

After he had entered her tutelage, Daoist Jadefine had given Northson five hundred kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. Thus, Northson had, at one go, trained all the way to the middle Wanxiang stage. Even in the Black-White College, this was incredibly rare!

The unspoken rule of the Black-White College was that masters would not give their disciples too many treasures; instead, they would provide guidance to them. The College would place those special Ki Refining techniques and divine abilities in the vault, and as the disciples rose in power, for example reaching the 'Dao Domain' level, they would then be able to go acquire those techniques.

Even though a mountain of gold or a silver was right there in front of them, the disciples were to go dig for them themselves. Only then would they acquire them. Divine abilities, secret arts; they were all there. However, had to train in earnest and make improvements before acquiring them.

If one didn't have to work hard and didn't make any improvements, and yet still received everything one wanted? This would result in a useless, hedonistic son of rich parents. Thus, the unspoken rule.

A master could help, could guide, could lead by the hand. But the disciple had to go out and struggle for himself! It was extremely rare for someone like Daoist Jadefine to give five hundred kilograms of liquefied elemental essence to a disciple. However, that was also the limit of Daoist Jadefine's doting on Northson; in other aspects, such as in handing out black-white pellets, she didn't wantonly give him things.

"Right." Northson nodded. "Senior apprentice-brother, go back to your own place for now. I'll go visit Master, then make some preparations...tomorrow, I'll come seek you out, senior apprentice-brother. We'll head out tomorrow morning and leave the Black-White College."

"Alright." Ning nodded. Northson immediately produced the Azure Dragon construct out of nowhere. Boarding it, he rapidly soared into the skies and disappeared.

"Junior apprentice-brother Northson has gone to visit his master." Ning boarded his own flying boat, soaring into the skies. As he did so, he turned to glance towards Immortal Diancai's residence.

"Master. Your disciple definitely will not let you down."

Chapter 8 – Entering the Raindragon Guard

The next morning, at dawn. Darknorth Peak.

“Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, I want to go alongside with you. I can pour tea for you and service you.” Cloudjade looked expectantly at Ning.

“We are going out in the world to adventure and to test ourselves. There will be countless dangers. This isn’t tourism! You had best just stay here calmly at the Black-White College.” Ning looked towards his retainers; Meng Roch, Cloudjade, Cloudship, Forgard, Weifang, and Nethersun. “After I leave the Black-White College, all matters here at Darknorth Peak, great and small, will be managed by Meng Roch.”

Cloudship and the others, upon hearing this, were all rather amazed. Roch? The weakest amongst them was most likely Roch. The others had all improved in strength, but because Roch’s ki foundation had been damaged, he had been forced to divide his attention and also train as a Fiendgod. For now, at least, he was the weakest of them.

“Yes, senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning.” Cloudjade and the others all acknowledged the order.

“Rocky. I entrust Darknorth Peak to you.” Ning looked towards Roch. The tall, swarthy Roch nodded solemnly. “Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, don’t worry at all.”

Ning suddenly raised his head. From afar, a streak of light was flying over. It was Mu Northson, riding on his Azure Dragon construct. Northson called out towards him from afar, “Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning!”

“Let’s go, Uncle White.” The flying boat appeared next to Ning, and the Whitewater Hound ambled into the boat. The two of them, a man and a large, snowy white hound, immediately soared into the air, moving to join with the distant Northson, aboard his flying dragon. Soon, they all disappeared into the distant mountain peaks.

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Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound walked out from the main gates of the Black-White College. "The next time we return," Northson said, "We will be even more powerful." Northson turned to look at the gates of the school, his eyes filled with anticipation and desire. He said softly, "And I'm going to bring back a pile of techniques and arts which the College doesn't have...I've grown sick of not having enough black-white pellets, and of the pain of not having enough of them to trade for all sorts of golem-related arts."

The Black-White College had a sea of techniques and arts; where did they all come from? Naturally, they had been accumulated over the years by its disciples, who had brought them back after adventuring in the outside world. When the disciples offered new techniques and arts, they would receive corresponding rewards in black-white pellets and liquefied elemental essence!

Ning actually had two extremely powerful techniques which he could offer to the College; the first was his divine ability, the [Windwing Evasion], while the second was the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]. The entire school only had five divine abilities; from this, one could see how rare they were. This divine ability, however, had been passed down from generation to generation by the Yuchi clan, and even his mother had told him that it was not to be given to outsiders. How could he so casually give it up?

As for the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], that was something he could make his own decision on, but he had already left the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] to the Ji clan; in the future, the Ji clan would rely on it to rise to prominence. His father had given his entire life for the Ji clan, and Ning had grown up within the clan ever since he was young. He felt a powerful sense of loyalty to the clan. For now, Ning still needed to seriously consider as to whether or not he was to give such a powerful, consummate technique to the College.

After all, all schools, sects, tribes, and clans viewed arts and

techniques with great importance. It was entirely possible that an entire tribe might be exterminated for the sake of a divine ability or a powerful secret art.

"Let's go," Ning said.

"Where should we go?" Northson asked.

"First, to the Heavenly Treasures Mountain." Ning laughed. "The Heavenly Treasures Mountain has countless treasures within it. If we are going to go adventuring, we'll need to prepare ourselves. We can go shopping there."

"Right. I really do want to go shopping." Northson nodded. And so, Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound immediately departed the Black-White College.

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A white-haired, young-faced old granny was standing within a courtyard. The water-scrrying mirror in front of her revealed Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound departing from the gates of the Black-White College.

"Northson..." Daoist Jadefine's eyes held a hint of both worry and anticipation.

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The black-robed, black-haired Immortal Diancai was seated in the lotus position on his bed. Suddenly, he opened his eyes. They were filled with anticipation. His disciple had gone out to temper himself.

Some disciples would return in two or three years. Some would only return after decades. Still others would return only after centuries! But of course, there were also some who would never return, having died in the outside world.

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Heavenly Treasures Mountain. This place had the support of the mighty imperial clan of the Xia Dynasty. They were in every single one of the commandery cities which were stretched across the vast land.

In the three years since joining the Black-White College, Ning had come out and met with Northmont Baiwei quite a few times.

Naturally, he had gone to the Heavenly Treasures Mountain as well.

"Uncle White, this time when we go adventuring, we shall be beset by dangers. What do you need?" Ning looked towards the Whitewater Hound by his side and spoke to him mentally.

"You've already given me that Lesser Teleportation Dao-seal," the Whitewater Hound sent back mentally. "Right now, there is one thing which I wish for the most...the 'Fuxi Staff Formation'."

"Fuxi Staff Formation?" Ning nodded. Although he couldn't compare with his Uncle White in terms of formations, in his spare time, Ning would also go meditate on them. Naturally, he knew about the renowned 'Fuxi Staff Formation'. Fuxi...that was a major power from the legends. Even in his previous life on Earth, Ning had heard some of the legends of Fuxi.

Fuxi, Houyi, Kuafu...these were all figures out of ancient legends. The Fuxi Staff Formation, in turn, was supposedly created by Fuxi, formed from eight arrays of eight staffs, for 64 staffs in total. Fuxi was able to use it to execute all sorts of formations. Those 64 staffs...there were boundless ways in which they could be used. In the hands of an ordinary Immortal cultivator, they might be useless, but in the hands of a formations expert, they could unleash astonishing levels of power.

The higher one's level of insights into formations was, the greater and the more miraculous the power one would be able to unleash from the Fuxi Staff Formation. According to legends, Fuxi was able to rely on this Fuxi Staff Formation to set up a grand formation that had the power to annihilate the heavens and exterminate the earth. In

addition, the Fuxi Staff Formation was something which could be carried about; like the 'Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation', it could be unleashed at any time. Thus, those who were skilled in formations would generally try to procure a set of the Fuxi Staff Formation.

"Alright. Leave it to me." Ning nodded.

"Young master Ji. Young master Mu." A devilishly attractive female Zifu Disciple had come to the gates of the Heavenly Treasures Mountain early on, and she now came to welcome them. Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound thus entered the Heavenly Treasures Mountain.

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There were countless treasures within the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, but the prices were similarly extravagant. Still, those who the Heavenly Treasures Mountain cared about would generally be given discounts. For genius disciples of the Black-White College, a 30% discount would be given. This was essentially as large a discount as was possible, because when the Heavenly Treasures Mountain purchased treasures, they would usually buy them at a 60% valuation!

But of course, there were stories of some Immortals who both bought and sold items at a cost of 60%; the Heavenly Treasures Mountain wouldn't try to make any money off them at all. But of course, for now, Ning's group couldn't possibly be treated in this way.

"I'm selling this set of sword formations. This magic treasure as well. Oh, this set of sword formations as well." Within the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, Ning quickly began to sell off the many magic treasures he had accumulated, such as the various magic treasures he had acquired when killing the Immortal cultivators of Snowdragon Mountain. He had even sold off the sword formations bestowed upon him by Northmont Blacktiger and senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow. This was because, although these sword

formations were of high quality, they came from different sources; some were ice-attribute flying swords, while others were fire-attribute flying swords. Having too many swords of different types was not beneficial to the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation].

Soon, an hour had passed. Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound all departed from the Heavenly Treasures Mountain.

Ning acquired a set of 360 high-grade Mortal-ranked water-attribute flying swords, then acquired another set of 360 high-grade Mortal-ranked fire-attribute flying swords. In total, he had 720 high-grade flying swords now. Although these were all produced by the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, and were flying swords of the most common variety, with nothing unique about them, they were still high-grade Mortal-ranked weapons. If he had to use liquefied elemental essence to purchase them, he would have spent nearly five hundred kilograms.

Blacktiger had gifted him two sword formations, while Bloodshadow had gifted him with one. He had managed to sell them off for nearly 450 kilograms of liquefied elemental essence. The magic treasures of Adept Xu Li, in turn, were sold off for nearly fifty kilograms.

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In short, in the end, Ning ended up paying an additional hundred kilograms in exchange for 720 high-grade Mortal-ranked flying swords, and a Fuxi Staff Formation. He then spent a bit more to purchase some necessary adventuring items.

"Ugh!" After exiting the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, Northson let out a sigh. "After entering the Heavenly Treasures Mountain, I realized how poor I actually am. All I have left right now is around five kilograms of liquefied elemental essence or so. As for you, senior apprentice-brother, I imagine you should be a bit better off."

"In the past three years, although I've won a few battles at the Dao Debate Palace..." Ning shook his head. "After this visit to the

Heavenly Treasures Mountain, I'm essentially bankrupt as well. I only have around fifty or so kilograms left."

Northson nodded, but then his eyes lit up. "Of course we won't be able to acquire any treasures while staying within the College all the time. We are now going to go out adventuring, and we'll have plenty of opportunities to acquire them. For example, back in the day, senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow managed to effortlessly gift you that precious Mortal-ranked sword formation to you, senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning. Clearly, to him, it wasn't worth anything at all. Now that we are going out adventuring, I trust that soon, we'll be just like him."

"Right." Ning's eyes were filled with eagerness as well. In the College, they would often hear about how this senior apprentice-brother found a senior's legacy and acquired some precious item, or about how that senior apprentice-sister had killed hundreds of other Immortal practitioners over ten-plus years of wandering and battling, and had acquired countless treasures. Or...

Well. In short, Ning and Northson had never been out adventuring, and so they naturally felt itchiness in their hearts.

"Just now, I traded for some treasures. My power has improved a bit, compared to the past. This time, I'm definitely going to go on a rampage around the world." Northson was filled with a boundless heroic aura.

"Hahaha." Ning just laughed.

His [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] still had, as its core, the Nine Yang Swords Formation which he had acquired in the underwater estate. The other 360 water-attribute flying swords and 360 fire-attribute flying swords...they both countered and reinforced each other, and extremely well-suited for controlling within the Dao of formations. Ning trusted that his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] would also have incomparably astonishing combat power.

"My long-distance attacks are now comparable to my close-quarters attacks," Ning mused to himself. Ning was now extremely powerful in close combat, because he had reached the ninth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], which was comparable to an ordinary early stage Wanxiang Adept Fiendgod! In addition, after he had reached the Dao Domain level in the Dao of the Inferno and gained a thousand black-white pellets, Ning had purchased both the divine ability [Heavenly Transformation] as well as the second scroll of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens].

Thus, even if he didn't use the utterly monstrous [Starseizing Hand] ability, just by relying on his [Windwing Evasion] and [Heavenly Transformation] divine abilities, Ning could unleash a truly astonishing amount of power in close combat. In addition, as a Ki Refiner, he had the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], and so he was also extremely strong. Both in close quarters and at long range... he was extremely powerful.

"Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, where should we go?" Northson looked at the nearby Ning. "Where should we go adventure?"

"Previously, our senior fellow disciples all recommended that we go join the Raindragon Guard," Ning said. "There are many benefits for someone to join the Raindragon Guard, and we can also take on missions from them, and so have fixed goals when we go out adventuring. In addition, as Raindragon Guards who are out on official missions...we can also overawe and frighten off some people, and also avoid some difficulties."

"Right." Northson nodded. "I was thinking the same thing."

The two finished their discussion, and their decision was...to first join the Raindragon Guard!

Chapter 9 – Raindragon Guard, Stillwater Division

Ji Ning, before leaving, paid a visit to Northmont Blacktiger's Estate as well. He bade farewell to his good friend, Northmont Baiwei, who upon learning that Ning was leaving, gave him quite a few pieces of advice. He knew exactly how dangerous adventuring in the outside world was, but in order to become a truly influential, powerful figure in the greater world, one did have to undergo a brutal, merciless tempering process.

Within a desolate, wild region outside Stillwater City. "Kakakaka... crunch." An Azure Dragon construct, hovering in midair, suddenly transformed, its body beginning to change into the shape of a wide, dragon-headed ship.

Ning raised his head, staring at the dragon-headed ship, then gave a surprised sigh and glanced towards the nearby Mu Northson. "Junior apprentice-brother Northson, this construct of yours can even transform? How formidable."

"You are an outsider who knows nothing at all about the art of constructs. Transformations are nothing more than parlour tricks," Northson said smugly. "Let's go. The Stillwater division of the Raindragon Guard is located at the Crimson Dragon Mountains. Although it's a bit far from here...flying on magic treasures isn't quite as comfortable as letting the construct fly for us on its own."

Laughing, Ning led the Whitewater Hound in boarding the dragon-headed ship. Standing atop the front of the ship, Northson had an incomparably bold appearance, and the ship quickly soared into the clouds, moving at high speed. Northson said, "I have an essence-gathering runic formation placed atop this construct, and so when flying at this speed, it won't use up any elemental energy at all. The elemental essence it absorbs while flying will be enough."

"I often heard aunt-master Jadefine praise you and say that your talents in the Dao of Constructs are extremely high. In the College,

we would at most engage in Dao Debates, and so I've never had the chance to personally witness your power in this regard, junior apprentice-brother Northson. Now that we are joining the Raindragon Guard...I'll be able to take a good look," Ning laughed.

"Make sure you watch with wide eyes." Northson raised his head proudly, seeming quite delighted with himself. Ning roared with laughter.

Although they had gotten to know quite a few senior fellow apprentices during the past three years at the Black-White College, and they were on very good terms with some, such as Ninelotus and Bloodshadow, in Ning's heart, the one he was closest to was still Mu Northson, who had joined the school alongside him. Northson, perhaps because of his young age, had completely focused on the Dao of Constructs since he was a child, and unlike Ning, didn't have memories from a former life. Thus, his behavior was quite juvenile and immature. In short; Northson had the temperament of a child!

If he liked something, he liked it; if he was mad, he was mad. He wasn't able to hide anything! When he first entered the school, he had been defeated twice in Dao Debates, and had been unspeakably angry. If he had been slightly better at hiding his emotions, he wouldn't have exposed his anger so openly. Strictly speaking...he was a bit too earnest and sincere.

In turn, however, Ning found it quite easy to get along with a little junior apprentice-brother like him.

"There we are. We reached the Crimson Dragon Mountains." Northson's eyes were gleaming as he pointed into the distance.

Ning stared into the distance. Past the clouds, he could see a chain of mountains that did indeed seem to be shaped into the sinuous figure of a dragon. The entire dragon-shaped mountain range was covered with a fiery red color, and from the distance, it did indeed look like a fiery, divine dragon! Its aura was quite astonishing as well, and in fact, it was even more terrifying than the grand formation of

the Black-White College, which had been reinforced by countless generations of Immortals of the College.

"It lives up to its reputation as one of the top two supreme powers within Stillwatery Commandery," Ning said with an amazed sigh.

Northson sighed in amazement as well. "The two supreme powers are the Northmont clan of Stillwater, and the Stillwater division of the Raindragon Guard. In addition, just from looking at the grand formation, we can see that they definitely far surpass our Black-White College. The Raindragon Guard really live up to their reputation. This was just a mere commandery division! When you think about how there is such a division in every single commandery which has been united under the control of the Xia Dynasty...one can't help but shudder."

Ning nodded. "This is true." The Northmont clan of Stillwater Commandery held, as their enfeoffment, the entire Stillwater Commandery. They had existed from the Fiendgod era; naturally, they had accumulated countless valiant powers.

As for the Raindragon Guard? One could see from a superficial look as to how powerful they are. In addition, they could ask for the support of the other divisions at any time, and could even request support from the headquarters of the Raindragon Guard in the imperial capital of the Xia Dynasty! To the Raindragon Guard which oversaw the entire Xia Dynasty, sending out a few hundred or even a thousand Immortals was a minor matter.

"It's precisely because they are so powerful, being representatives of the Xia Dynasty, that even we desire to join the Raindragon Guard," Ning said. "Come. Let's move over."

"Right." Northson nodded. The dragon-headed boat immediately swooped lower, moving directly towards the Crimson Dragon Mountains.

The Crimson Dragon Mountains were shaped like an enormous

dragon, with the head of the dragon being the mountain where guests were welcomed. Ning and Northson directed the construct vessel to swoop downwards, landing directly atop a flat area at the guest-welcoming mountain. After collecting the Azure Dragon construct, Ning, the Whitewater Hound, and Northson all moved over. Right at this moment, two Zifu Disciples who wore fiery red armor walked over from afar. A cold look on their faces, they barked, "Why have you come to our Crimson Dragon Mountains?"

Ning and Northson both felt as though they were being rather overbearing, but this was the local division of the Raindragon Guard, after all. The two of them couldn't act too inappropriately.

"We have come to join the Raindragon Guard," Ning said. "Oh?" The two fiery-armored Zifu Disciples gave them a glance, and the leader, a tall, skinny cultivator, said in a cold voice, "Then follow me."

Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound immediately followed after him. They all moved through the mountainous as easily as though they were moving through flat land, and these crimson-armored Zifu Disciples could be seen throughout this guest-welcoming peak.

"The two of you, listen up." The tall, skinny cultivator leading to them said in a cold voice, "Quite a few wish to join our Raindragon Guard. However, you have not yet joined and are not yet Raindragon Guards. And so, you'd best obediently obey the rules here..."

Northson, upon hearing this, frowned. Ning, however, was more or less calm.

"Remember this. First of all, you are not Raindragon Guards; thus, within the Crimson Dragon Mountains, you are forbidden from fighting. If you violate this, you will be killed with no mercy!"

"Second, the only place within the Crimson Dragon Mountains which you may move about in is this place, the guest-welcoming mountain. If you barge into other areas, you will be killed with no mercy!"

"Third, you are not to touch or damage the restrictive formations set upon the guest-welcoming mountain. Violators will be killed with no mercy."

The tall, skinny man didn't even look at Ning or Northson. Northson's face was now turning rather ugly. He sent mentally, "Junior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, the Raindragon Guard have too many rules, and they are too brash and arrogant. We are disciples of the Black-White College, and yet they treat us like this?"

"Forget about being disciples of the Black-White College; even if we were members of the Northmont clan of Stillwater, it wouldn't mean anything in this place." Ning had read the intelligence reports, and knew a few things about the Raindragon Guard.

Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound continued to follow from behind. Soon, they arrived at the back of the mountain, where there were wooden houses and stone houses scattered everywhere.

"Take a look." The tall, skinny cultivator pointed towards the distant stone and wood houses. "Within those houses are those who wish to join the Raindragon Guard. These houses were built and left behind by others who came to join us. You can choose an empty one and live there for now. When we've cobbled together enough people, you'll be sent to the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains."

After speaking, the tall, skinny cultivator turned and departed, quickly disappearing.

"Who the hell is he? He's so arrogant," Northson muttered. "He's an auxiliary 'Keeper' of the Raindragon Guard," Ning said. He had met with Baiwei quite a few times, and had learned many things.

"A 'Keeper' of the Raindragon Guard?" Northson said, surprised, "The Raindragon Guard actually has Keepers?"

Ning nodded. "Of course. Those of us who join the Raindragon Guard are all quite free and unrestrained; we roam about the world,

and only when we come to take on missions will we appear! However, the Raindragon Guard also needs some people who are permanently stationed here, or some soldiers who they will be able to trust completely. Thus, the 'Keepers' were created!"

"The Keepers of the Raindragon Guard are like soldiers; they are controlled extremely strictly, and are subject to many rules. They aren't as free as us," Ning said. "You should know that the Raindragon Guard has an auxiliary corps! Generally speaking, the Keepers are selected from the auxiliary corps."

"Oh!" Northson now understood.

"Although their freedoms are restricted, they have the highest degree of trust from the Xia Dynasty. Within the Raindragon Guard, they have access to more divine abilities, secret arts, treasures, etc. As for us, even after we become Raindragon Guards, we'll still need to carry out missions in order to receive such benefits," Ning said. "To get something, you have to give something."

Northson hurriedly nodded. "I don't want to become a Keeper. There are so many rules; how does it even feel like being an Immortal practitioner? That's just a form of suffering."

"Everyone has their own choices," Ning said with a laugh, then sighed. "Those who are extremely talented will naturally have the option of choosing to be free and unrestrained. But for those who are less talented, they naturally might give up these things, so as to be able to acquire some top-class techniques, secret arts, and whatnot."

"Mm. That's true as well." Northson nodded, seeming to have understood something. As the two chatted, they continued to move forward. The stone and wooden residences were all very simply made; generally speaking, they had just a single house and a yard. A number of them already had Immortal cultivators residing in them.

"This one." Northson pointed at a grassy area in front of him. As he

pointed, instantly, a streak of light flew out, and the streak of light quickly began to transform and expand atop the ground, quickly developing into quite an elegant-looking estate.

"An estate made from a construct?" Ning was startled. The Dao of Constructs truly was a remarkable one. Carriages, warships, people, beasts, estates, or even cities; all these things could be produced through the Dao of Constructs.

"Who knows how long this adventure of ours shall last? It's quite unsafe to stay in an empty, desolate area. Thus, I personally created this 'Moonwood Estate', which even a Wanxiang Adept would need to spend quite a bit of time to break into," Northson said smugly.

"Not bad, not bad," Ning laughed as he walked inside. And so, Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound took up residence within the 'Moonwood Estate'. One day after another passed, and the Immortal cultivators living in the nearby stone and wood houses began to discover that a construct-estate had appeared in their midst. However, none of them commented on it, just waited quietly together.

Early one dawn, a month after Ning's group had arrived.

"Everyone!" A sonorous voice thundered out, instantly filling every single stone room and even wooden room. Even the construct-estate which Northson had created was unable to block out this sound, which blasted forth next to Ning, Northson, and the Whitewater Hound's ears.

"It is time to go to the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains." The voice continued to echo forth.

Ning felt his chest grow tight, and his face changed. "Such terrifying power. This level of power...makes me feel as though I cannot resist it whatsoever. It must be an Immortal." Although he didn't feel confident in being able to fight a Primal Daoist, he wouldn't feel as completely powerless as he did now. Thus, it should be an Immortal.

Ning and Northson both walked out. Northson waved his hand, and the entire construct-estate was tucked away.

At this moment in time, figures emerged from the stone and wooden houses as well. These were all people who wished to join the Raindragon Guard.

Chapter 10 – The Immortals of the Raindragon Guard

Ning stared at his surroundings. During the past month, all of the Immortal cultivators had remained in their own stone or wooden houses, training quietly. To them...training and waiting for a month was a very simple matter. Thus, during the past month, he hadn't really gotten to know any of them!

"A hundred!" Ning's gaze swept past them, and he realized that the total number of figures who had emerged numbered exactly a hundred people. Ning then turned his gaze to the front.

Up ahead, there were three figures who were staring at Ning and the other 99 who wished to join the Raindragon Guard. These three were led by a silver-haired, black-robed elder who carried a desolate, killing aura about him. When he swept his gaze past the prospective recruits, everyone, Ning included, felt an invisible pressure bear down upon them. It was as though a black dragon was staring at a crowd of ants.

"An Immortal!" Ning said silently to himself. The gaze of the silver-haired, black-robed elder flashed like the gleam of a weapon, causing them all to feel shock in their hearts. He suddenly spoke out. "Your batch of a hundred Immortal cultivators has been completed. Now, you can go to the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains."

Ning and the rest of the hundred all listened carefully.

"You are not yet Raindragon Guards," the silver-haired, black-robed elder continued coldly. "Thus, you were assigned to live in this desolate, backwater part of the mountain. Once you become true Raindragon Guards...you will naturally be permitted to enter the depths of the Crimson Dragon Mountains."

As he spoke, he pointed towards the distance, to a peak of the Crimson Dragon Mountains. "That place is the place where true Raindragon Guards reside. The Crimson Dragon Mountains aren't a

place for pleasure, and it isn't as bustling as Stillwater City. The only thing we have here is the endless quiet." The silver-haired elder continued calmly, "Those who focus on training quietly will generally take over one of the cave estates of the Crimson Dragon Mountains and train within. The number of Immortals who are currently training within the Crimson Dragon Mountains...is greater than twenty!"

Once these words came out, Ning and the rest of the hundred Immortal cultivators all felt their hearts clench tightly. The Raindragon Guard really did live up to its reputation as being one of the two titans of Stillwater Commandery! More than twenty Immortals?

Ning and Northson were from the Black-White College, which was ranked as the third greatest power. And yet, they now understood what a tremendous difference in power there was. Although the College had quite a few Immortals...just the ones training in at the Raindragon Guard's base numbered over twenty, much less the ones out on assignment or in the other branches spread throughout the Xia Dynasty.

"In fact, some Celestial Immortals will occasionally come from the imperial capital to expound on the Dao for the Raindragon Guards present." The silver-haired elder swept his gaze forward. "In terms of power, our division of the Raindragon Guard is comparable to the Northmont clan of Stillwater. In terms of our roots and background, however, the Raindragon Guard vastly outstrips them."

"So long as you can enter the Raindragon Guard, divine abilities, secret arts, and even the chance to head to the core of the Xia Dynasty, the imperial capital...all these are possible. You might even have a chance to go to the main headquarters of the Raindragon Guard to learn and be trained."

"All of this...requires you to first join the Raindragon Guard!" The silver-haired, black-robed elder stood there, waist as straight as a mountain, his voice reverberating sonorously in each person's inner

heart. "Now, each of you shall tell me of your history and your power. If you wish to join the Raindragon Guard...you must meet the minimum requirements of our Raindragon Guard. If you aren't even able to fulfill the minimum requirements, then there is no need for you to go to the Gaol Mountains's wild marshes; you can just go back right now."

Whoosh! Instantly, a bronze mirror floated up into the skies, hanging there. "All of you, fully explain your histories and your level of strength. If you dare to lie at all, you will be killed without mercy. You." The silver-haired elder pointed towards a black-bearded youth, and the bronze mirror turned towards him.

The black-bearded youth immediately said, "Skysplitter Sword Sect, Ki Refiner, middle-stage Wanxiang Adept, Bu Violetsun!"

"Alright." The silver-haired elder nodded. "Next."

"Eastriver Clan, Ki Refiner. Late-stage Wanxiang Adept, Eastriver Cloudsoar!"

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One practitioner after another began to reveal their histories. The Raindragon Guard would naturally want to learn about the backgrounds of those who came to join. After learning their backgrounds and names...given the intelligence networks of the Raindragon Guard, they would quickly be able to obtain detailed reports.

Not a single person dared to lie. To lie in front of an Immortal of the Raindragon Guard would be suicidal.

"You." The silver-haired elder pointed towards Northson. Northson answered, "Black-White College, Ki Refiner. Middle-stage Wanxiang Adept, Mu Northson."

"The Black-White College?"

"Someone from the Black-White College came as well."

Instantly, quite a few Immortal cultivators began to pay attention to Northson. Although they also came from extremely top-tier schools, sects, and extremely large clans that were on the same tier as the Black-White College, those tribes and clans had many disciples and descendants. Every single member of the Black-White College, however, was definitely a peerless genius. Not a single one of them was easily offended.

"You." The silver-haired elder looked towards Ning.

"Black-White College, Ki and Fiendgod Body dual refiner. Ninth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. Ji Ning." Ning gave his response.

The silver-haired elder gave Ning a surprised glance. For even an Immortal to be surprised, the reactions of the other Immortal practitioners went without saying. All of them were filled with boundless amazement and curiously. To join the Raindragon Guard...generally speaking, the early Wanxiang Adept stage was a minimum requirement, but of course, if one trained in the legendary, number one Fiendgod Body Refining Technique, the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens], one would be an exception. Being at the Zifu Disciple level would suffice.

This situation, however, was extremely rare. Unexpectedly, today they managed to encounter someone who had trained to the ninth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens].

"The ninth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] is comparable to an ordinary early stage Fiendgod Wanxiang Adept. Upon using a divine ability, the power will definitely be significant; after all, he came from the Black-White College."

"He's too rash. No matter what, he's only an early stage Wanxiang Adept. Since he didn't discuss his power as a Ki Refiner, he hasn't reached the Wanxiang level in it either. He's a weak Ki Refiner, and

just barely qualifies as a Fiendgod Body Refiner...upon encountering a group of enemies, they will trample him to death." The Immortal practitioners were all thinking this to themselves.

Those who dared join the Raindragon Guard were all quite self-confident, and could be considered elites amongst their peers.

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"Mm..." The silver-haired, black-robed elder looked towards Ning's reflection in the bronze mirror, then nodded slowly. "You are indeed at the ninth stage. Next." The silver-haired, black-robed elder looked towards the next person. But, right at this moment...

A voice suddenly echoed in Ning's mind. "Your name is Ji Ning? The [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] has been publicly acclaimed since the Fiendgod Era as the number one technique, and it has quite a few special aspects. Once you join the Raindragon Guard, you'll learn how to better unleash your battle power as a Fiendgod. You must return from the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains alive...and actually, it'd be better if you waited until you reached the tenth stage or the eleventh stage before going to the wild marshes. Then, you will definitely be incomparably safe."

The silver-haired, black-robed elder even gave Ning a sidelong glance. Ning understood...this Immortal of the Raindragon Guard was the one who had mentally sent him this message. Ning smiled towards this Immortal of the Raindragon Guard, but he didn't hesitate at all. Clearly, his mind was set.

"Special?" Ning pondered this statement. "When I was in the underwater estate, the giant yellow bear also said that my Fiendgod body can be described as 'perfect', and capable of learning the [Starseizing Hand] which Daoist Threelives left behind. In addition, even in the Fiendgod Era, the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] was publicly acclaimed as the number one Fiendgod Body Refining Technique. It has spread so far...I imagine that it is quite easy to acquire. Even our Ji clan has a complete copy of the first

scroll and the first nine stages of it!"

Ning had the feeling...as though there must be a tremendously powerful force which was propagating the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]. In addition, this technique had been publicly acknowledged long ago. The Xia Dynasty itself had only been established during the later periods of the Fiendgod Era. This technique had existed even before the Xia Dynasty's founding...and yet, the Xia Dynasty actively propagated it.

"There must be some reason for this," Ning mused to himself. "However, without question, this technique, as one which even the giant yellow bear praised, shouldn't have any problems. Since the technique itself has no problems...then for now, a kid like myself has no need to worry about the other reasons."

"This Immortal of the Raindragon Guard said that there are some special aspects to it, and that after joining the Raindragon Guard, I'll learn how to truly unleash the combat potential of my divine body?" Ning instantly grew rather eager. The Raindragon Guard was the most powerful military force of the entire Xia Dynasty. It only made sense that it had some special secret arts.

In terms of its roots and its background...the Raindragon Guard was naturally countless times superior to the Black-White College. Not even the Marquis of Stillwater could compare to the entire Raindragon Guard.

"You." The silver-haired elder pointed to the final Immortal cultivator. This man was dressed in a beautiful golden robe, and he said with respect, "Snowdragon Mountain, Ki Refiner, peak Wanxiang Adept, Dong One!"

Ning's ears twitched. He turned to look over towards him, and that Immortal cultivator just so happened to be looking at Ning as well. Their gazes intersected.

"He knows me." Ning instantly realized this, when their gazes cross.

The Immortal cultivator named Dong One had a smile on his face, and he even nodded towards Ning. Ning just gave him a calm look, not smiling at all. His parents and uncle, in a way, had all died due to the disciples of Snowdragon Mountain. How could Ning possibly smile when facing a disciple of Snowdragon Mountain?

Ning began to ponder in his heart. "Why has this Wanxiang Adept of Snowdragon Mountain come here? Did he accidentally encounter me, or was he chasing after me deliberately?"

Previously, he had remained in Stillwater City this entire time, and so Snowdragon Mountain didn't have any chance to take revenge on him. Was Snowdragon Mountain pursuing him as soon as he had emerged?

"Their intelligence networks shouldn't be this good," Ning mused. "In addition, I'm a disciple of the Black-White College, and the personal disciple of an Immortal. Snowdragon Mountain shouldn't be so bold as to act in this way. It's possible that this is all just a chance meeting."

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Each person had finished describing their histories and strengths. The silver-haired, black-robed elder waved his hand. Instantly, streaks of light flew out towards each person. Ning stretched out his hand, clasping it; it was a talisman.

"This is a talisman," the silver-haired, black-robed elder said. "Bind it. Only then will you be able to enter the inner regions of the Crimson Dragon Mountains. The teleportation array within the inner region leads to the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains. If you haven't bound any talismans, the protective formation around the Crimson Dragon Mountains will not permit you to enter."

Ning and the others didn't hesitate at all, as they all immediately bound the talismans. "Go." The silver-haired, black-robed elder's body suddenly became shrouded by clouds which appeared out of

nowhere, and the clouds lifted up and dragged Ning and the others away. However, the spirit-beasts which some Immortal cultivators had brought were all left behind.

"The test for entering the Raindragon Guard is a personal test. These spirit-beasts are not to enter the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains," the silver-haired, black-robed elder said. "Have them stay here for now. If you come back alive, you can seek them out."

Ning stood there atop the clouds. He turned to look downwards towards the Whitewater Hound. "Uncle White, wait for me," Ning sent mentally. "Be careful," the Whitewater Hound sent back, looking towards Ning.

And then, the silver-haired, black-robed elder led the group of Immortal cultivators atop his clouds. They quickly flew away, moving deeper into the distant inner regions of the Crimson Dragon Mountains.

Chapter 11 – The Wild Marshes of the Gaol Mountains

When standing atop the clouds and staring downwards, one would be vaguely make out the Immortal residences that lay scattered throughout the winding mountains. Occasionally, one would also seem some figures flying about on magic treasures; most likely, those were Raindragon Guards.

Just as Ji Ning and Mu Northson were staring with curiosity towards those Immortal cultivators, suddenly...the cloud began to sink downwards.

“That’s...” Ning saw, in the distance, a towering mountain peak, atop which a massive, complicated, tower-shaped formation had been built.

Boom! The cloud landed, and Ning’s group of Immortal cultivators stared towards the tower-shaped formation. This tower-shaped formation up ahead faintly glimmered with gray light, and it was 2400 meters high! The base had a diameter of three hundred meters, and was divided into what appeared to be nine halls. The entire tower-shaped formation’s structure appeared to be made from rare metals, and it was covered with the carvings of many runes. The densely clustered runes covered the entire, 2400 meter high tower-shaped formation.

The entire tower-shaped formation emanated a hazy gray light. Only the tip of the tower shone with a white light. Next to the formation, there were ten old men dressed in plain clothes who were on guard.

“This is the teleportation array?” Northson’s eyes were shining. “Should be,” Ning said, also incredibly curious.

They had heard long ago about the legendary ‘teleportation arrays’, but had never used them. In Stillwater Commandery, only the Raindragon Guards, along with a very few number of others, had the right to use the teleportation array. But of course, one could bring

one's retainers and spirit-beasts along. It was only because Ning's group was here to join the Raindragon Guard that an exception was made and they were permitted to use it once.

"Teleportation array?"

"A teleportation array that is 2400 meters high? The division stationed in my homeland has a teleportation array as well, but it is only 300 meters high, much smaller than this one."

"I've never even seen one."

Although these Immortal practitioners all had seen many things, upon seeing this massive teleportation array, they all sighed in amazement. As for those ten plainly dressed elders, upon they all bowed towards that silver-haired, black-robed elder.

"Make your preparations," the silver-haired, black-robed elder instructed. "These hundred Immortal cultivators are to be sent directly to the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains!"

"Yes." The ten elders immediately entered the grand formation, which began to change subtly. As for the silver-haired elder, he glanced towards Ning's group of a hundred, then said in a sonorous voice, "This teleportation array is a top-tier teleportation array. It can even teleport you directly to the imperial capital of the Grand Xia Dynasty! You can reach any region of this vast world through this teleportation array and arrive in an instant."

"Although the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains are two million kilometers away, you will arrive in an instant," the silver-haired, black-robed elder said. "Eh?!" Suddenly, the silver-haired elder's face changed slightly. Swoosh! He suddenly disappeared from the spot.

This completely astonished Ning and the others, who were still listening to him speak. "Why did he vanish?"

"Something important must have occurred."

"Immortals truly are extraordinary. He vanished in an instant, and it wasn't some sort of movement technique." The Immortal cultivators all began to chat amongst themselves.

The ten plainly dressed elders who were guarding the teleportation array were all puzzled as well. Why'd he leave? To change the destination and to verify the teleportation was a simple, fast matter.

"Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning," Northson whispered. "Although I've heard of the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains long ago, I don't know how dangerous it is, exactly."

"It is quite famous...it is ranked as one of the most dangerous locations within the borders of our Stillwater Commandery. I heard that in that place, there are many areas where space is fractured, and which might lead directly to some fractured dimensions. There are many monsters lying in wait there, and according to legend, even Fiendgods lie in hiding there," Ning said.

The land under the control of the Grand Xia Dynasty was simply too vast. Aside from some safe areas like Swallow Mountain, there were also countless mysterious, special, dangerous regions!

Even the Earth of Ning's previous life had, in an area of ten thousand kilometers, countless mysteries and secret areas. The same was true, naturally, for the vast world ruled over by the Grand Xia Dynasty. Within Stillwater Commandery, there were quite a few bizarre places, and some had been created as part of the aftermath of battles that had occurred back in the Fiendgod Era. There were also Immortal estates, relic sites left behind by major powers, and more.

One of the top ten danger zones of the entire Stillwater Commandery were the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains! However, these danger zones were also filled with countless opportunities.

"I, too, have heard that there are Fiendgods here." Suddenly, a handsome, white-robed man moved closer to them. Ning and

Northson both turned to look.

"Fellow Daoists Ji Ning, Mu Northson," the handsome, white-robed man immediately said with a laugh. "I am Eastriver Cloudsoar, and my Daoist title is Cloudsoar as well."

"My Daoist title is Twinwood," Northson said quite straightforwardly. At the same time, he glanced at Ning, then continued, "My senior apprentice-brother is Ji Ning. His Daoist title is Darknorth! Right, you just spoke of Fiendgods...can it be that there truly are Fiendgods within the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains?"

The handsome, white-robed man immediately said, "Can it be that you two have never heard of the legends of the 'Gao Mountains'?"

"The legends of the Gaol Mountains?" Ning and Northson exchanged glances, then shook their heads.

"According to legend, an unfathomably long time ago, just as the Fiendgod Era was drawing to an end," Cloudsoar said slowly, "The group of powerful Immortals who had established the Grand Xia Dynasty used a tremendously powerful magic treasure to imprison and seal a large group of Fiendgods! This powerful magic treasure is the 'Gao Mountains'. It would have been incredibly difficult to kill all the Fiendgods, and most likely some of the Immortals would have died as well. Thus, they simply used the Gaol Mountains to seal these Fiendgods away. The Gaol Mountains sealed them away from the outside world, completely separating them away and preventing them from absorbing the energy of the outside world. The Fiendgods would only grow weaker and weaker, and after a million years, they would become incomparably weak."

Ning and Northson listened and nodded. Immortal cultivators and Fiendgods; at a certain level, they wouldn't need to eat or drink, but they would still need to absorb energy from the outside world. Ki Refiners would absorb natural, elemental ki, while Fiendgods and Fiendgod Body Refiners would absorb some other types of energy, such as the energy of the Five Elements, the energy of the stars, the energy of the sun and the moon, etc. If one was unable to absorb

energy from the outside world, one would naturally grow weaker and weaker.

"But afterwards...an extremely powerful Fiendgod who was amongst the group that had been sealed away actually managed to break through the Gaol Mountains and charge out of the sealed grounds! A wild, savage battle erupted. The Immortals and the Fiendgods fought viciously, causing the entire region to shatter and crack. Although no one knows what the results of that battle were, the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains ended up the way they currently are," Cloudsoar said.

Ning laughed. "The Eastriver clan lives up to its reputation. You even know about secrets like this." Cloudsoar laughed as well. "I've just flipped through some books on myths and legends and heard of this explanation. I have no idea if it is real or not."

"I heard that back in the Fiendgod Era, the Fiendgods dominated this world," Ning said. "Now, however, it is us humans who dominate the vast world, with monsters being somewhat weaker...and there are almost no Fiendgods left."

Northson's eyes were shining. "I'm quite curious about the Fiendgod Era as well." Cloudsoar laughed. "When we grow stronger, we'll naturally learn more."

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"This must be clearly investigated!" The silver-haired, black-robed man was in midair, and his voice snapped out icily. Next to him was a black-furred, three-eyed hound who stood in midair. It spoke out. "Yes! If anyone from the Northmont clan of Stillwater impedes us..."

"Kill them all!" The silver-haired, black-robed elder said in a cold voice. "Don't act in your capacity as Raindragon Guards, but kill all those who oppose you. This matter must be investigated."

"Yes," the three-eyed, black-furred hound said respectfully.

"These Marquisates have grown too accustomed to ruling over the territory which has been enfeoffed to them. They all grow restless, and every so often, they need to be given a drubbing," the silver-haired, black-robed elder said in a cold voice. "It seems yet another group of people shall die in the Northmont clan of Stillwater Commandery. Go!"

"Yes." The body of the black-furred, three-eyed hound flickered, and then it disappeared without a trace.

Only now did the silver-haired, black-robed elder ride his flying cloud downwards at a leisurely pace. Soon, he arrived at the mountain peak which contained the teleportation array. Atop the peak was Ning, Northson, and the rest of the Immortal practitioners, all of whom had been waiting for quite some time.

Whoosh! The silver-haired, black-robed elder landed. Instantly, the surrounding area fell silent. Those ten plainly dressed elders all looked towards him respectfully as well.

"All of you, listen clearly," the silver-haired, black-robed elder said. "Those of you who wish to join the Raindragon Guard; your testing grounds shall be the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains! This place is one of the most famous, most dangerous locations of Stillwater Commandery. What you need to do is to survive in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains for three months, and bring back the head of a Wanxiang-level monster."

"If you survive three months and bring back the head of a Wanxiang-level monster, you will join our Raindragon Guard. If you die in the wild marshes or come back without the corpse or head of a Wanxiang-level monster, then you will have failed. Understood?"

The silver-robed elder swept them with a gaze. The hundred Immortal cultivators all nodded, not hesitating in the slightest. There were many who participated in the Raindragon Guard trials, and this mission they had been assigned could be considered an ordinary one. Since they dared to come...they naturally had some degree of

self-confidence.

"Excellent." The silver-haired, black-robed elder nodded. "Since that's the case, then all of you can head out now. I hope that in three months time, I'll be able to see you return with the head of a monster. Remember; don't underestimate those monsters. You wish to kill them, but they also wish to kill you. The hatred that has built up between us over countless years means that they won't show you any mercy at all."

The hundred Immortal cultivators all agreed. Even the youngest amongst them, Mu Northson, had a look of resolve in his eyes.

"All of you, come in. Don't go beyond the limits of the teleportation base."

The ten plainly dressed elders began to make the arrangements. Ning's group all moved into the teleportation array. The entire teleportation array was enormous, capable of transporting thousands of individuals.

"Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, my master instructed me...that after we go to the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains, we must be wary of not only the monsters, but also of other Immortal cultivators," Northson sent mentally.

"They all know that we are disciples of the Black-White College. The disciples of the Black-White College are incomparably few in number, and each of us carry priceless treasures on us. Thus, sometimes there will be group attacks launched against us disciples of the Black-White College. We are not yet Raindragon Guards...there are no laws against fighting amongst potential recruits."

Laughing, Ning glanced at Northson. Indeed, human hearts were hard to fathom. In his previous life, he had lived during the era of the information explosion...Ning had definitely learned far more things than most of the people who lived in this comparatively closed, barbarian world.

Despite that, Ning still said, "I know. Junior apprentice-brother, you must be careful as well."

"Right. If we two disciples join forces, hmpf...if one comes, we'll kill one. If ten come, we'll kill ten!" Northson sent back.

Suddenly...

The entire surrounding teleportation formation lit up. The blurry gray light on the surface of the tower began to brighten, covering the entire teleportation formation. Someone looking in from the outside would no longer be able to see Ning and the other hundred Immortal cultivators within.

Swish!

The white light emanating from the peak of the tower suddenly increased in luminosity a thousandfold. Its brilliance made it appear to be a second Golden Crow within the skies.

After the bright light turned dim, the blurry gray light returned to normal as well. Ning and the hundred Immortal cultivators within the formation had already disappeared. By now, they had already arrived at the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains.

Chapter 12 – Entrance

Ning felt a ripple pass through the area around him. When he had been teleported from Serpentwing Lake to the underwater estate, it had been a similar feeling.

“Eh?” Everything before him suddenly grew clear. Mu Northson was standing next to him, and other Immortal cultivators were around them as well. “We made it?” Northson stared, wide-eyed, at the surrounding area. “That really was fast.”

Ning carefully weighed the surroundings as well. They were currently in a teleportation array that was three hundred meters tall; clearly, it was a size smaller than the one by the Crimson Dragon Mountains. Off in the distance...there were wild marshes, mountains, lakes, and wilderness all about them, as far as the eye cold see.

“Two million kilometers in the blink of an eye.” Ning had known what was going to happen, but after experiencing it for himself, he couldn’t help but sigh in amazement. “I heard that some Immortals can instantly teleport a million kilometers. I wonder how long it will be before I have that ability.”

“All of you, come out.” “Hurry up.” Two ancient voices rang out, and two plainly dressed elders outside the teleportation array waved towards them. Only now did the Immortal practitioners walk out from the teleportation array.

“All of you, listen closely,” one of the white-haired, slightly-pudgy elders barked. “These are the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains. As far as you should be concerned, the only safe spot in the entirety of the wild marshes is this spot, right here! There are always Raindragon Guards stationed here, and a grand formation has been laid down which no one dares to trespass through.”

Ning and Northson all looked over carefully. They, too, had discovered that this teleportation formation was built atop a

mountain peak, which was ringed with Immortal cavern estates. Most likely, quite a few people were stationed here.

"There are a few other things to remind you of," the fat elder said. "The first is that for three months, you are not permitted to come here. If you come here to avoid danger, you will have failed."

"The second is that while you are adventuring in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains, you must be extremely careful; do not stay in any single place for too long, such as for a month or longer. You must know that there are far more monsters here in the wild marshes than there are humans, and they are far more familiar with the Gaol Mountains than you are. If you stay in one place for too long...you will make it easy for the monsters to join forces against you and attack you en-masse. However, staying in one place to rest for a day or two every so often is fine."

Ning and the others were listening carefully. This was all potentially life-saving advice.

"The third is that although the monsters of the wild marshes are dangerous, the natural environment of the Gaol Mountains is even more dangerous. Some places might be filled with shattered space... if you aren't careful, you might exit our world, at which point, given your current level of power, you will all die."

"The fourth is that due to environmental issues, getting one's bearings is quite difficult in the Gaol Mountains region. Don't just rely on your senses to judge directions! You need to judge the directions in accordance with the movement of the sun, the moon, and the stars in the skies. Otherwise, if you simply rely on your own senses...you will never be able to return, and will forever be spinning in circles within the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains."

"Alright. The four most important points have already been provided to you. Go. I hope that in three months time, I'll be able to see you all return," the fat elder said.

Finally, the skinny elder spoke out as well. "If you discover that it is too dangerous and that you are unable to handle it, you'd best head back in a hurry. Although you will have failed, you will have at least preserved your life."

"Go, go." The fat elder waved his hand. "Go," the skinny elder said as well. Ning and the rest of the Immortal disciples all stared towards those hazy outlines of Immortal cavern estates ringing the mountain. They could all sense the surge of powerful energy surrounding this entire mountain peak. This was the power of that formation.

And then...swish! Swish! One streak of light after another flew out from the peak at high speed, flying towards the outside. Some moved alone, while others moved in pairs or triplets.

"Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, where shall we go?" Northson asked. "Every direction is the same," Ning said. Sweeping the area with his gaze, he pointed towards the North. "There are many mountains over there. Let's go over there."

"Alright." Northson nodded. Whoosh! A dragon-headed ship suddenly appeared before them, and Ning and Northson boarded the ship. This dragon-headed ship was only thirty meters long; clearly, it was sized appropriately for roaming the wild marshes. If they made it too large...it would just make it easier for monsters to find them.

Soon, the hundred Immortal cultivators had all spread out in each direction. The two elders responsible for guarding the formation had very complicated looks in their eyes. The skinny one sighed, "I really envy them. I can sense the vitality and energy just oozing from them. Clearly, all of them are very young. Youth is a form of wealth, you know; they have plenty of time to go fight, to struggle, and to go farther along their Immortal paths. As for us...we won't have these opportunities."

"But at least we've lived a few hundred years," the fat elder laughed. The skinny elder stared into the distance. "I wonder how many of

this batch will make it back alive."

"If half can make it back, that'll be pretty good," the fat elder said. "However...this group knew exactly how dangerous things would be, and they still elected to go adventure. If they can become Raindragon Guards...they'll be able to benefit from the vast Dao repositories and magic treasures which the Guard possesses, and their Immortal paths will become more surefooted ones. The particularly outstanding ones will even have the chance to go to the imperial capital of the Grand Xia Dynasty, where they will be trained at our Raindragon Guard's headquarters!"

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The dragon-headed boat flew through the clouds in the sky. "These high clouds are actually the safest places, here within the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains." Northson was standing at the helm of the ship.

Ning nodded. "However, we still need to be careful. Once we discover any spatial ripples, we need to immediately avoid them." "I know," Northson said. "The warship is flying quite slowly, actually."

"Alright." Ning nodded. "Look." Northson stared down through the thin clouds below at a large mountain. This mountain was particularly majestic in a queer way; it pierced straight through the clouds. In addition, one could see with the naked eye countless monsters atop the mountain. Some were monsters that were in human form. They appeared to be moving about in a manner reminiscent of an army.

"Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, there must be Wanxiang-level monsters in that great mountain," Northson said.

"Based on what I know...Wanxiang-level monsters are extremely common in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains, and Zifu-level monsters can be seen everywhere. As for Primal monsters...they are quite rare," Ning said. "Some monsters have taken over a mountain

and have proclaimed themselves the local king, while others travel by themselves. Those who have taken over a mountain are all extremely strong."

Northson nodded.

"It's quite hard to run into one of the Wanxiang-level monsters who are wandering about by themselves," Ning said reflectively. "So, our target should be the monsters who have crowned themselves 'kings' of a mountain. But from far away, we aren't able to tell exactly how strong those 'king' monsters are. If we are unlucky, we might run into a Primal monster."

"Then what should we do?" Northson asked. Ning had come up with an idea long ago. However, he looked at Northson. "Junior apprentice-brother Northson, do you have any ideas?"

"I do have a few," Northson said with a frown. "The first is to follow other Immortal practitioners about and let them be the ones to investigate. When the battle begins...after verifying that the target is a Wanxiang monster, we'll attack."

"Not bad." Ning nodded in praise. Northson continued, "The second method is to search for a mountain with monsters that don't seem too strong. Nine out of ten, that mountain would be the territory of a Wanxiang monster."

"And the third idea?" Ning prompted. Northson's eyes lit up. "As Master said, the hearts of men are difficult to fathom. Since that's the case, I imagine that there will be cases where Immortal cultivators will attack other cultivators. Generally speaking, this would involve several of them joining forces. If several of them join forces against us...I refuse to believe that not a single one of them will have acquired the corpse or the head of a Wanxiang monster. We can set up a trap...so if anyone comes to ambush us, we'll counter-ambush and kill them."

"However, all three plans have their own flaws. I'm not confident in

any of them." Northson was quite irritated. "Still, we have three months. That should be enough."

Ning laughed. "Your methods are good, but I have an even simpler one." Northson looked expectantly towards Ning. "What method?"

"Search for a seemingly ordinary-looking mountain of monsters," Ning said with a laugh. Northson stared. "Isn't that my idea?"

"After we find an ordinary mountain...I'll sweep it with my divine sense!" Ning laughed. "If the opponent can sense my sweep, then it will most likely be a Primal monster. If they aren't able to...then they will be Wanxiang monsters. Even if we are so unlucky as to run into one of the incomparably rare Primal monsters, we can immediately use our evasive techniques to instantly flee."

Northson said, startled, "Divine sense? Senior apprentice-brother, your soul has truly reached the divine sense level?" Ning nodded. "You really..." Northson was shocked. "When you joined and defeated senior apprentice-brother Bloodshadow and the others, you demonstrated the ability to use multiple sword arts. Many of our senior fellow disciples suspected that your soul must be extremely powerful, perhaps at the divine sense level. Even more of them suspected that you were actually a reincarnated Immortal. So you actually have reached the divine sense level? In the past three years, you've never mentioned it!"

"You never asked," Ning grinned.

"Then are you a reincarnated Immortal as well?" Northson's eyes were shining. "I heard that as reincarnated Immortals grow older, they will gradually reawaken their memories."

Ning shook his head. "No clue. I haven't awakened any Immortal memories, at least." What a joke. Ning's memories of his past life were perfectly clear; he wasn't an Immortal at all.

"Oh." Northson nodded, then said excitedly, "This is wonderful.

Joining the Raindragon Guards poses a great test to others, but for you, senior apprentice-brother, it's far too simple. We can use your divine sense to run a test from far away...and after verifying things, can immediately act. If we are so unlucky as to run into a Primal monster, we can immediately flee with evasion techniques. This really is simple."

Ning laughed. "If even someone with a divine sense is unable to join the Raindragon Guard, that'd be quite bizarre, wouldn't it?"

"Badass," Northson grinned widely. "Then I, your junior apprentice-brother, shall benefit from your strength, senior apprentice-brother."

"Junior apprentice-brother, no need to be so polite." Ning turned his gaze downwards, beginning to search for mountains with monsters.

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Just one hour later. Ning and Northston were standing within a desolate area, staring towards a towering mountain before them. Given Ning's visual acuity, he was able to see that there were some monstrous figures within this mountain.

"This one. Let me search it," Ning said. "Alright." Northson had already taken out a Dao-seal.

Although the two of them were both capable of simple evasion techniques, and were able to move multiple kilometers away with a single movement, with the aid of a Dao-seal, they would be able to move a thousand kilometers away. Ning knew that even a Primal monster would find it hard to search a thousand kilometers with divine sense.

"Whoosh!" With but a thought, Ning instantly sent a surge of power divine sense forward, enveloping this entire mountain.

Chapter 13 – Two Humans Battle Three Monsters

Ji Ning's powerful divine sense thoroughly investigated the entirety of the mountain, inside and out. "Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning, what's the situation?" Mu Northson asked.

Ning cracked a smile, then looked at Northson. "Junior apprentice-brother Northson, need you ask? This mountain really does have quite a few monsters within it. Based on the aura of these monsters, there should be a single Wanxiang monster and around ten or so Zifu monsters. There are also some Xiantian monsters that can transform into human form, as well as a crowd of lesser monsters."

"Just one?" Northson chewed on his lips. "That's it? There's two of us though."

"Thus, your idea was the right one. We first find a seemingly-ordinary mountain of monsters, with the expectation that the monsters within won't be too powerful," Ning laughed. "A mountain like this, the two of us can flatten when we charge in. However, this is the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains. Let's be a bit cautious."

"I'll listen to you in all things, senior apprentice-brother," Northson nodded. "Let's go. Let's sneak up the mountain." Ning pointed upwards.

Northson said, worried, "There should be formations, right?"

"Although there are formations on these monster mountains, with my divine sense spread out, I can see everything." Ning had quite some experience in analyzing formations, after all, while his Uncle White was a Godbeast Whitewater Hound which was legendary for its intelligence and which was a master of formations. Ning would often chat with Uncle White; naturally, he would gain some pointers from him. Occasionally, Ning's own thoughts would cause Uncle White to gain certain insights as well.

"Let's go." Swoosh! Swoosh! The two stealthily slipped upwards

through the wild grass, moving closer and closer to the mountain at high speed.

A black-faced, muscular fellow was seated in the lotus position atop a jade bed, looking quite like an Immortal practitioner. The black-faced fellow suddenly opened his eyes, and a baleful aura shot out from his eyes, but then was quickly retracted.

He stared towards the stone door in the distance. With but a thought, he made the stone door rumble open. Immediately, a small figure charged in from outside. It was a skinny underling, who knelt down and said, "Congratulations, Majesty, for having finished your meditations!"

"Mm." The large, black-faced man let out a grunt. "Go. Have the Madame come, and arrange for a table of food to be prepared."

"Yes." The skinny little figure respectfully departed at high speed.

The black-faced man left his jade bed, walking leisurely out of the hall of his cavern estate and moving outside the stone door.

Standing outside, he seemed to be able to see all sorts of sights in the vast marshes outside, and a killing desire filled his eyes.

"Humans often come in batches to attack these wild marshes of our the Gaol Mountains. the Gaol Mountains's marshes belong to us monsters. If a human comes, we will kill him. Mm...it's been quite a long time since humans have come to my place."

The wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains were simply too vast. There were quite a few human Immortal cultivators who came to this place, but they were all spread out extremely sparsely throughout the wild marshes. A monster would only occasionally run into a human Immortal cultivator.

"Thirty years ago, that human monster offered me quite the amount of liquefied elemental essence and magic treasures, which I traded for liquefied elemental essence as well. It allowed me to shave two centuries off of my training, while my power increased greatly." The

black-faced man was quite eager. "I wonder when I'll meet yet another foolish human."

Those who dared to crown themselves kings of a mountain in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains naturally laid down many traps around their nest, making it so that any humans who arrived would be unable to leave!

"Your Majesty!" Suddenly, a soft voice rang out. The black-faced man turned to look. A seductive, green-clothed, devilish woman entered, carrying a jade platter with a beautifully carved beasthead goblet of wine, as well as a perfectly made bottle of wine.

"Madame." The black-faced man smiled. "Your Majesty, you've been training for many months now. You've worked very hard. This is the wine which I personally brewed, the 'Immortal Moonspirit wine'."

The green-clothed, devilish woman walked over while speaking. Monsters, after becoming Xiantian lifeforms, would gain intelligence equivalent to a human's. This green-clothed, alluring woman was a Zifu monster, while the black-faced man was a Wanxiang monster.

Training took up quite a time...and these monsters knew how to enjoy themselves. They, too, need companions. Although in this part of the world, the monsters were tremendously powerful, it was still the Grand Xia Dynasty which had truly unified the world, a dynasty of humans. Many of the major powers amongst the monsters had official positions within the Grand Xia Dynasty. This was actually the reason why monsters continued to exist.

However, although the high-level individuals were on fairly good terms with each other, generally speaking, human Immortal cultivators and monsters fought quite fiercely against each other.

A sumptuous feast of delicacies had been prepared, including meat, fruit, and wine. The black-faced man picked up a piece of meat and began to chew it, then frowned and barked towards the outside, "Go, go to rear mountains and to the place where we are raising humans.

Catch a tender one and send it over. This meat is tasteless. Human flesh is much better."

"Yes." The monster outside immediately replied in a high-pitched voice.

"Those humans eat the flesh of us monsters, and in fact, some major power even created a 'spirit-beast seal' and other things to forcibly enslave us." The black-faced man let out a cold snort. "We monsters naturally can eat humans as well, and in fact, we should enslave them as well! Since there's a spirit-beast seal, why can't there be a 'human-slave seal'?"

The alluring, green-clothed poured a goblet of wine for her king. "Your Majesty, I heard that beyond the greater worlds, there is are major powers amongst the monsters, capable of dominating the Three Realms, who are indeed capable of creating a method for enslaving humans. But unfortunately...in our greater world, the world is formally ruled over by the Grand Xia Dynasty. How can they possibly permit a technique allowing monsters to enslave humans be spread out?"

"Madame, is there truly a method by which monsters can enslave humans?" The black-faced man stared at the alluring, green-clothed woman.

"That's just a legend." The alluring woman shook her head. "How would I, a minor Zifu-level monster, know about such things?"

The black-faced man let out a cold snort. "After I become a monster Immortal one day, I will definitely...not good!" The black-faced man suddenly rose to his feet, staring outside the stone door.

"Your Majesty?" The alluring woman was shocked. The look on the black-faced man's face had changed, and he slapped the table, which with a shudder disintegrated into white dust. He roared with fury, "Since you dare come, why haven't you shown yourself?"

"Your Majesty, we caught a delectable human child for you." A terrified voice rang out from afar. And then..."AHHH!" A miserable scream, and then the terrified voice was cut off.

The alluring woman in the cavern estate knew that something was amiss. Terrified and restless, she said, "Your Majesty, what is going on? What is happening? Has a human Immortal cultivator come? Don't we have layers of formations and restrictive spells here? How could the human cultivators made it all the way here?"

The black-faced man just stared fixedly towards the outside. "They are formations experts," he said, gritting his teeth. What he didn't realize was that...

Ning had actually gone around quite a few of his formations while avoiding activating the others. Ning had thus gone straight through, not setting off any alarms at all. In the end, Ning had been forced to break through the bewildering formation which was always active and protecting the caverns; this was why the black-faced man was suddenly shocked into wakefulness.

"Don't cry, don't cry. In a short while, Big Brother will help you slaughter that monster." Three human figures walked over. Walking in front was a fur-clad human youth, while behind was a white-robed youth who was holding the hand of and comforting a toddler who was dressed in just leaves.

"Waa, waaaaaa." The toddler sobbed, tears still cascading down. Just now, the monster had instantly been chopped into mincement, which had utterly terrified the toddler.

Northson, enraged, pointed straight at the black-faced man. "Monster, the day of your death has come."

"Hahaha, it's been quite some time since I encountered any human Immortal cultivators. You dared to come to my place? Today shall be the day of your deaths." The black-faced man suddenly produced two massive black scimitars, then let out an angry howl. "DIE!"

Bang! Above the hall, one bright star after another, and within this sea of stars, there was even a brilliant moon.

“Kill!” The black-faced man’s face was savage. As for Northson, he howled in anger, “Senior apprentice-brother Ning, hand this monster to me.”

Northson was comparatively immature in terms of personality. Upon learning that this child was about to be eaten by this old monster... his belly had instantly become filled with rage.

“Alright.” Ning nodded, standing to one side, but prepared to attack at any moment.

While Northson howled in rage, the skies above him also became filled with stars. Amidst the sea of stars, both a brilliant moon and a blazing sun appeared. The sun and the moon hung in the skies...this caused the face of the Wanxiang monster to change. Only extremely talented humans with significant backgrounds were capable of manifesting such a Manifestation.

“Die.” Northson gnashed his teeth. Swish! Swoosh! Two black lights began to gather in Northson’s hands. He opened them, and the two rays of black light shot out, forming two massive water-snakes within the air.

The two Manifestations struggled against each other, but the Wanxiang monster’s was clearly struggling.

“Bang!” “Bang!” The two giant water-snakes directly clashed in the air with the two giant black scimitars which the black-faced man had unleashed. The power of the collision was so great that even the nearby woman’s face changed dramatically. Instantly, she transformed into a white-furred fox, wanting to flee. However, a cold light flashed through Northson’s eyes, and one of the water-snakes swept out with its tail, smashing directly against the fleeing white-furred fox’s body. Crunch. The white-furred fox spirit was crushed into meat paste.

Ning stood there watching. He nodded to himself. "My junior apprentice-brother has the upper hand. He lives up to his reputation as a genius of the Dao of Constructs who entered the Black-White College at age fourteen. Formidable."

He had joined the Black-White College at age fourteen, and had been completely absorbed in his meditations in the Black-White Diagram. If it hadn't been for Ning eclipsing everyone else, Northson would have been a dazzling, eye-catching genius. Only, because he walked the Dao of Constructs, many of his senior fellow disciples weren't able to truly comprehend what a monstrous genius Northson truly was.

"Halt!" The black-faced man immediately bellowed. He had the sense that things were not right at all. In the past, he had once killed a human Wanxiang Adept. How was this seemingly soft, weak, white-robed youth so strong? In addition, the fur-clad youth standing behind the white-robed youth seemed to be even more dangerous.

"Too late to feel regret!" Northson snapped coldly.

"Why haven't they arrived yet? Why haven't they arrived?" The black-faced man struggled to endure. Although his power would increase dramatically once he transformed into his real form, if he truly did that, this would truly become a battle to the death. What he needed to do, right now, was to delay.

"I shattered the talisman earlier. My Third Brother and Fifth Brother are located the closest; with their movement techniques, they should have arrived by now." But suddenly, a hint of joy appeared on the face of the black-faced man.

He could sense something. Although the formations he had set around the mountain hadn't been able to detect these two humans, they had detected the arrival of his two good brothers.

"Just you wait. My Third Brother and Fifth Brother will suddenly ambush you, and with me joining forces...the two of you will

definitely die," the black-faced man mused to himself. At the same time, he continued to furiously struggle to resist the attacks.

At this moment, Ning, standing behind Northson, had a changed expression on his face. With a cold snort, he said, "Old monster, so you actually have reinforcements coming."

The black-faced man's heart instantly clenched. How had this Immortal cultivator found out? Could it be that this Immortal cultivator had also set down a formation in the area, and so had discovered his allies coming?

No longer considering anything else, he immediately roared loudly, "Third Brother, Fifth Brother, attack together and kill these two Immortal cultivators!"

Northson also let out a wild howl. "Two more coming? Wonderful! We were complaining about there not being enough Wanxiang monsters!"

Ning looked towards the stone door outside the cavern estate, a faint sword-light flashing through his eyes.

Chapter 14 – The [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] Reveals Its Might

Two figures, transformed into streaks of light, were making haste towards the cavern estate of this monster mountain. One of the two figures was a hawk-nosed, golden-robed man, while the other was a dark, skinny youth. These were monster kings of two nearby monster mountains. The wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains were incomparably dangerous, and even monsters had to form alliances to help each other.

In this surrounding area, a total of eighteen Wanxiang monsters had formed an alliance; if one encountered any danger, they would immediately shatter their runic talismans, and the other seventeen would all immediately be aware of it and would come at maximum speed!

The eighteen Wanxiang monsters had all sworn an oath to the Dao of the Heavens. It was precisely because the eighteen of them had formed a mutual defensive alliance that in this region, it was extremely rare for a monster to be killed.

“Big Brother shattered his runic talisman. I wonder if he encountered one of those lone wanderer freaks, or an Immortal cultivator!”

“The two of us are stronger than Big Brother. When we join forces... regardless of whether its wandering monsters or Immortal cultivators, they will all die!”

The two old monsters were chatting mentally to each other. The original ranking of the eighteen monsters was based on age and seniority, not strength. Their Big Brother was a Blacktusk Elephant who had been training for a very long time.

“Third Brother, Fifth Brother, attack together and kill these two Immortal cultivators!” Suddenly, a loud roar rang out from within the

distant cavern estate.

"We've been discovered!" The two Wanxiang monsters exchanged glances. They had wanted to launch sneak attacks, but they no longer had the chance now. "Kill!" They transformed into streaks of light, charging directly towards the door of the cavern estate.

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Within the cavern estate, Mu Northson was exerting his strength to deal with the black-faced man, while Ji Ning was holding onto the child's hands, looking at the expression of amazement on the child's face. He said consolingly, "Don't worry. Just stay next to me and don't run around."

Bang! Bang! Three streaks of light suddenly shot in from outside; it was a sharp knife and two sharp awls. They were all incredibly sharp and had a shocking aura.

"Hmph." Ning, seeing the situation, applied his will. Whoosh! A dense cluster of 729 flying swords suddenly appeared next to Ning. At the very core of those swords was a sword formation that was noticeably more powerful; these were the 'Nine Yang Sword Formation' swords and 36 high-grade Mortal-ranked water-attribute flying swords.

As for the other eight major sword formations, four were formed from the 324 water-attribute flying swords, while the other four were formed from fire-attribute flying swords.

Water and fire looped amongst each other, and in the center were the 'Nine Yang Swords'!

"[Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], level nine!" Ning's powerful divine will completely filled these 729 flying swords, and they transformed into fire and water, competing against each other and reinforcing each other. The water was Yin in nature, while the fire was Yang in nature; given Ning's accomplishments in the art of formations, he clearly now found it much easier to control the

swords. Operating this sort of exquisite, pure sword formation was actually quite comfortable for Ning.

"Seven hundred flying swords, all of which are high-grade or top-grade," Ning sighed mentally. "In addition, half are fire, while the other half are water; controlling them is an utter joy."

Controlling so many flying swords placed an incomparably shocking amount of pressure on the soul. Ning, however, was able to withstand it easily.

"Crackle crackle crackle."

The flying swords rose and fell in an undulating pattern, all of them emitting a hazy white light on their surfaces. In front of Ning's chest, an even more brilliant, moving flying sword formed of white light had began to form! This white flying sword was as pure as jade, and it was covered with a lustrous layer of light that made it seem incomparably lovely. The entire flying sword emanated this layer of light, as though it were the treasure of an Immortal.

This was the sword-light of the ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]! Now that Ning was using such high-quality Mortal-ranked swords, and had such a powerful soul to control them with....it could be said that Ning had already reached the theoretical limit of power a person at the Zifu Disciple level could reach when using the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]. Such power already vastly oustripped even using the likes of divine abilities such as [Heavenly Transformation] or the [Luminous Eye of the Heart]..

"Go!" Ning smiled. This white, jade-like flying sword shot out, streaking out in an arc and flowing forward like water. Rumble... those three streaks of light were trapped and blocked by this flowing stream of water.

"As I thought, the fur-clad youth really is more powerful." The black-faced man currently battling against Northson felt shock in his heart. "He's actually able to simultaneously block the combination attack of

two of my brothers by himself."

Thud! Thud! The hawk-nosed, golden-robed man and the dark, skinny youth both landed within the estate, and their gazes towards Ning were filled with caution as well.

"Third Brother, Fifth Brother!" The black-faced man hurriedly sent mentally, "The two of you, deal with the fur-clad one. Leave the smaller one to me. Use all your strength and kill him."

"Alright, Big Brother."

"Done."

These two newly arrived Wanxiang monsters realized that if they were to maintain human form and control magic treasures from afar, they probably wouldn't be able to suppress this fur-clad youth.

"Human Immortal cultivator, accept death!" The two monsters roared with rage, and then began to transform. The hawk-nosed, golden-robed man instantly transformed into a divinely handsome and golden-feathered winged eagle! As for the other, the black, skinny youth, he instantly transformed into a four-legged weirdbeast with coal-black skin and two curved yellow horns on its head.

"Die!" The black-faced man also transformed into mist, then resolidified into a long-trunked elephant with enormous black tusks.

The three monsters were now all in their true forms! In addition, the power of the magic treasures they were using to attack Ning and Northson had suddenly increased dramatically!

"Junior apprentice-brother Northson," Ning sent. "Will you be able to hold?" Northson sent back confidently, "Don't worry. I haven't even started using my abilities."

Ning laughed. "Excellent." Right at this moment, the gold-feathered eagle charged forth with a howl, its pitch-black claws ripping through the air and suddenly expanding tenfold in size to the point where the air itself seemed to emit an ear-piercing screech. Ripples

in the air that could be seen with the visible eye appeared; the power of this claw definitely surpassed that of the earlier magic treasure it had used.

Monsters and humans were different; monsters had bodies which were innately powerful and possessed innate abilities. For example, some monsters had the innate ability to control water; and even if they didn't train in a Fiendgod Body Refining Technique, they would still possess enormous strength! Some of them might even be able to temper parts of their body into magic treasures, such as their horns, their claws, or their tails. This would result in their very body becoming an intrinsic magic treasure, and thus possess astonishing power when used.

"Rumble..." The entire cavern estate was beginning to shake. The four-legged weirdbeast had lowered its head, and its hooves thundered across the ground as it charged towards Ning. The two curved yellow horns on its head suddenly expanded in size and became even sharper than before, and its hoofsteps became incomparably weighty, causing the entire cavern estate to begin to shake and collapse. When these two monsters used all their power, they were truly shocking.

"Hmph." Ning shook his head. "Die."

The white sword formed from the ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] instantly slashed through the air. In midair, an enormous millstone of fire and water suddenly appeared. Within the center of this millstone of fire and water, a wild tempest of incomparable, astonishing power suddenly formed! The white flying sword was in the center of this millstone of fire and water, and it, too, dissolved into the tempest.

Fast! This was the Ning's [Tripartite Millstone Sword], the power of which was only inferior to the second stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]. It could also be referred to as the 'Waterflame Millstone Sword'. Although it was named after the slowly-grinding millstone, it was supremely fast.

Wherever the sword light flashed past...fire and water howled as well, and the millstone itself transformed into a blur! "Not good." The golden-feathered eagle sensed tremendous danger, but it still sent its sharp claws over in a savage blow.

Whoosh! It was too fast. The flashing light of the millstone sword easily dodged past the claw, then slashed past the body of the golden-feathered eagle. The feathers of the golden-feathered eagle were incomparably tough, as unyielding as a magic treasure...but they weren't able to defend against this attack in the slightest. They were immediately broken through, and then the light of the Waterflame Lotus Sword turned, sweeping directly towards the impending, charging weirdbeast monster.

"Third Brother!" The four-legged weirdbeast monster was instantly scared silly. His third brother had actually been killed in a single exchange. Everyone in the region knew how powerful the eagle talons of his third brother were. Ordinary hawks used their claws to snatch snakes; from this, one can imagine how fast hawk claws could strike. And yet, the eagle talons of a Wanxiang monster, an intrinsic magic treasure, still hadn't been able to block and snatch that sword light.

He had never even heard of swordplay on this level. But this was what a Sword Immortal was! It must be understood that when Ning first joined the Black-White College, he had been able to shock everyone just by using the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]. Now, he had been able to use the [Lesser Five Elements Sword] manual to develop this Waterflame Millstone Sword, a technique which vastly surpassed the first stance of the [Three-Foot Sword] in power. What's more, the technique was executed through a sword-light that was manifested by the ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]. Its speed and power...how could a Wanxiang monster possibly defeat it?

"Flee." The four-legged weirdbeast monster instantly slammed the ground with its hooves, causing the entire cavern estate to tremble.

It turned its body, immediately ramming into the nearby stone wall, intending to charge through.

Rumble! The stone wall was instantly shattered, but the light of the millstone sword followed as fast as the wind, continuing to chase after it and not intending to halt before it perished. The four-legged weirdbeast tried to dodge, and it even shot out one of the sharp curved horns on its head, sending it directly towards the sword light.

The sword light flashed!

Rumble...the four-legged weirdbeast's body continued to charge out of the cavern estate through sheer momentum...but soon, it fell apart into two pieces, slamming against the rocks outside the cave and causing them to shatter and knock the nearby trees down. However, its bisected body collapsed as well. Blood continued to ooze from its mouth, but moments later, it breathed its last.

"Die." Northson, seeing that his senior apprentice-brother had shown off his power, let out an angry roar as well. The two black water-snakes suddenly criss-crossed, connecting to each other at the tail and instantly forming an enormous black circle which wildly wrapped itself around the black-tusked elephant monster, which was frantically attempting to flee. As the black circle looped around it, it then tightened...crunch!

The upper half of the body of the entire black-tusked elephant was instantly crushed into meat paste, and it died a miserable death.

As for the golden-feathered eagle that lay on the ground, it had died long ago. And so, just like that, three Wanxiang monsters had perished.

Ning waved his hand, collecting the corpses of the golden-feathered eagle and the four-legged weirdbeast. As for Northson, he collected the black-tusked elephant's corpse as well.

"It's about to collapse." Northson charged outside. As for Ning, he

had already led the child outside the cave, which was covered with a spiderweb of cracks. With a rumbling sound, it collapsed in on itself.

"Haha, we instantly acquired three corpses of monsters. All we need to do is wait three months, and we'll be Raindragon Guards."

Northson was extremely excited.

"Right." Ning nodded gently. The power unleashed by his 720 Mortal-ranked flying swords through the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] had caused Ning to feel delighted as well.

"Hey kid." Northson looked towards the young child. "Why are you here on this mountain?" The child stared blankly. Just now, these two people had effortlessly killed those three monsters, who had appeared to be so incomparably terrifying and savage that his heart trembled from fear! It was simply inconceivable that they had died.

Upon hearing Northson ask him where he came from, the child stared blankly for a moment, but then his tears began to roll down. He pointed into the distance. "There."

Chapter 15 – Azure Skysnake

Mu Northson turned to look towards the direction which the child was pointing at, while Ning went to hug the child. “Let’s go. I know where it is!” His divine sense covered the entire monster mountain. How could Ning not know?

Swoosh! Swoosh! The two transformed into streaks of light, vaulting through the mountain. The many monsters within the mountain had all been utterly terrified and had gone into hiding. Ning’s group quickly arrived within a deep gorge within the mountain.

“Ah?!” Northson stared downwards, and what he saw made his face changed. Ning stared down silently as well. Below the gorge, there was an extremely deep crevice that was roughly three hundred meters long. Within the crevice were humans, their bodies covered just by tree leaves and bark. All of them were either children or youths; there wasn’t a single old person there. They lived there in the deep crevice, numb to life. Above the crevice, there was a net made from steel which completely covered and sealed the crevice.

“They are being...raised here?” Northson’s body began to tremble slightly. Grinding his teeth, he said, “These monsters truly deserve to die. They deserve to die!”

Swoosh! Northson leapt downwards. There were some lesser monsters standing guard within the deep crevice; they didn’t know that their king had already perished.

“Who goes there! This is Elephant-King Mountain!” A tall, horned monster with a trident in its hands roared angrily, while the group of lesser monsters behind him howled in support.

“Hmph!” Northson let out an enraged snort. The area around him instantly transformed into the darkness of the night. The night sky was filled with dazzling stars, and the sun and the moon hung there amongst them. From within the dazzling sun, a giant hand suddenly

stretched out, seizing the suddenly-terrified monsters who were trying to flee, pale-faced. Trapped by that giant hand of golden light, the monsters all felt their hearts shudder.

"Why are they here?" Northson thundered. As for Ning, he just stood to one side, quietly.

"Mighty Immortal, are you referring to these human slaves?" The horned monster, captured by the hand of golden light, hurriedly explained, "These human slaves were brought here long, long ago by his Majesty, who found them elsewhere and decided to raise them here. The big ones birth little ones, and when the little ones grow up, they can birth more! His Majesty delights in eating human flesh, and so the younger, tender ones are for his Majesty to eat. As for some of the older slaves, their meat isn't as delicious, and so we'll be given some of it to taste."

Even Ning's face turned ashen as he heard this.

"You deserve death!" Northson let out a thunderous roar, and his Manifested hand clenched. Instantly, those monsters, howling in agony, were crushed into meat sludge. Even that horned monster who had transformed back into his original form was crushed into mincemeat by that Manifested hand.

"Clank!" The Manifested hand then clawed downwards, ripping apart those locked steel chains. With a explosive sound, the many chains were instantly shattered into small pieces, and then were tossed to one side.

The many humans who were living within that deep crevice were trembling. They all moved closer to each other, staring upwards in terror.

"They've been raised as animals for too long; their slave-mentality has been deeply imprinted upon them." Ning shook his head and let out a soft sigh, then lowered his head to look at the child next to him. "Only the smaller, younger children might be able to recover."

"Senior apprentice-brother." Northson looked at Ning. "Let's help them out, okay?"

Ning nodded. "Of course we'll help them. To us, it's just a little bit of extra effort, but to them...it means the changing of their destinies."

"Right." Northson nodded, then said with frustration, "But we must stay within the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains for three months. We can't be taking care of them for this entire time. What should we do?"

"If we encounter any danger, we can't look after them as well as ourselves. Let's deliver them straight to the Raindragon Guard," Ning said. "That is the only safe place within the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains. As for whether or not the Raindragon Guard will accept them...let's discuss that if it comes to that. Even if the Raindragon Guard aren't willing to take care of them, we can give these humans some food and let them survive for three months."

"That's something," Northson nodded. Rumble! The giant hand of golden light pressed downwards, and instantly a deep passageway appeared at the margins of the crevice, leading from it to the outside world.

"From now on, you are no longer slaves!" Northson stared at the humans within the corral as he called out to them in a loud voice.

These humans had always lived together, and so they had naturally managed to teach each other and pass down the human language. Naturally, they understood. However, their simple minds made it so that they remained rather uneasy. They stared, frightened, towards the two youths standing in the distance; one a fur-clad youth, while the other was a white-robed youth.

Still...even after the passage of many years, they would never be able to forget this life-altering moment. They would never be able to forget these two youths.

"Junior apprentice-brother Northson, let them board the warship," Ning said. "Right." Northson nodded, then waved his hand. Instantly, the Azure Dragon in the sky quickly transformed into a dragon-headed warship which landed on the ground.

Ning barked out, "All aboard the ship!" At the same time, he used his divine sense to invisibly influence them. Although Ning had not learned the [Soulcharmer Art], he had still viewed the abridged version of the technique and had learned some of the most basic, elementary secrets of it. By using his powerful soul to emit the slightest hint of a soul-ripple, he was able to nudge these numb slaves to all shuffle towards the warship.

"Mommy." The child next to Ning ran straight towards his mother.

"Let's go." Ning raised his head, staring towards the sky. "There are other Wanxiang monsters coming."

"Good." Northson, however, was filled with a surging killing intent. But Ning shook his head. "Don't push it. We attacked that elephant monster, and two more Wanxiang monsters suddenly popped up out of nowhere. And now, four more Wanxiang monsters are attacking...if this continues, who knows how many Wanxiang monsters will arrive. I imagine that these monsters must have formed an alliance long ago, and they might even have Primal monsters supporting them."

Northson instantly came to his senses. "Senior apprentice-brother, your words are correct." He nodded his head. "We already have enough Wanxiang monster corpses. There really is no need to kill any more."

Swoosh! The dragon-headed warship quickly soared into the skies, flying into the distance.

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Right at this moment, an incomparably beautiful woman, along with two men and a second woman, arrived in sequence outside the

demolished ruins of the cave estate. "I can no longer sense the auras of big brother, third brother, and fifth brother," the beautiful woman said with a frown.

"Ninth Sister, can it be that that big brother and the others have already died?"

"We already came quite fast. They've only fought for a short period of time. The three of them were all Wanxiang monsters." The other Wanxiang monsters didn't dare believe it.

The beautiful woman shook her head. "Look at the bloodstains. Look at the auras left behind. Big brother and the other two are probably already dead." But suddenly, she lifted her head. A streak of light was soaring into the skies, rapidly charging into the clouds. That streak of light was a dragon-headed warship.

"A warship."

"The warship of an Immortal cultivator."

"It must be the one which killed big brother and the others. Ninth Sister, let's attack and get revenge for big brother and the others." The other monsters immediately began to clamor out. Eighteen of them had joined into an alliance...but in terms of power, their ninth sister, the peacock monster, was the most powerful of them all.

The beautiful woman remained silent for a moment, then said, "If they were able to kill big brother and the other two in such a short period of time, even if we charged over to gain revenge, most likely more than half of us would die. But if we were to wait for the other monsters to come...they will have fled long ago. Let's go. We can only blame big brother and the others for having terrible luck."

The other monsters were only calling out in bravado anyhow. Upon hearing the words of the peacock monster, they all nodded quite quickly.

"Let's go."

"Let's go."

They all transformed into streaks of light, departing from Elephant King Mountain.

Three of the eighteen Wanxiang monsters had died; this made the peacock monster and the other monsters feel as though their forces were not strong enough. Thus, they decided that they were going to ally with some of the other nearby Wanxiang monsters as well. In fact, they even began to wonder if they should try to recruit some of the solitary wanderer Wanxiang monsters as well.

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Within a deep mountain cave in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains.

"Slither, slither..." A small azure serpent was swimming about in a pool of water within the cave. The water of this pool emanated an azure light and a freezing aura, and there was a block of ice emerging from the center of the pool. If an Immortal cultivator saw it...they would instantly recognize this piece of ice as being a piece of 'ancient glacial ice'. It would only be formed in places where the elemental energy was extremely, extremely cold.

"How truly comfortable. The wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains really are wonderful. This dangerous, mysterious place is filled with many treasures, but I can easily slip past all of them using my Void Blink." The little azure snake wriggled about in delight, frantically absorbing the energy from this freezing pool. "Compared to before, my homeland of Swallow Mountain is an utter wasteland. There's almost no treasures there at all."

"Wheeeee. Wonderful, wonderful!" The little azure snake was incomparably delighted. "It seems as though the masters were correct in having me come here to the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains." The little azure snake's little head swung to wrap around the piece of ancient glacial ice. Pulses of cold energy flowed

into its body. "My power is rising incredibly quickly. When I first arrived at the Gaol Mountains, I was just at the peak Zifu level. Now, three short years later, I've risen to the middle Wanxiang level."

"However, I'm still much weaker than the Patriarch. How long will it be before I, too, will become a monster Immortal? By then, I'll be able to take up a large reach of land for myself as well and style myself the Immortal master of the region." When the little azure snake thought about the Patriarch, its eyes couldn't help but be filled with envy.

"No." The little azure snake's eyes suddenly radiated a cold light. "After leaving the Gaol Mountains, I need to make a trip back to Swallow Mountain to take care of some things. In particular, that Ironwood Zhan who pursued and attacked me...I was in such a miserable state back then. I must kill him and annihilate the entire Ironwood clan!" When it thought about its hated foe, Ironwood Zhan, the little azure snake also thought about someone else.

It was the very young human youth, the one who always dressed in fur clothes. That fearless, yet monstrously talented youth who always addressed it as 'little snakey-snake'.

"Alas. I only know that you are of the Ji clan. I don't even know your name." The little azure snake muttered to itself, "You and I fought multiple times, and it was only as a result of those fights that I comprehended the 'Void Blink' technique. However, back then, I wasn't able to save you. Don't worry. When the time comes, I'll take revenge on behalf of you as well. I'll annihilate that Ironwood Zhan."

"If you are still alive...given your talent, you must be very powerful by now." The little azure snake began to mumble to itself again. "But definitely not as powerful as me. I have the Void Blink technique and have gained many marvelous legacies."

Right at this moment...a hundred kilometers outside the cave...

There were two Immortal cultivators, moving like streaks of light, who

had stealthily landed on the mountain.

"You aren't mistaken, are you?" One of them, a gray-robed Immortal cultivator, said in a low voice.

"Absolutely not. When I tortured those Zifu monsters, they definitely wouldn't have dared to lie to me. They all said that in recent days, a lone wanderer has appeared in this region; an Azure Skysnake monster which had even fought multiple times against their king," the white-robed Immortal cultivator said.

The gray-robed Immortal cultivator nodded. "After we kill this Azure Skysnake, we'll have enough Wanxiang monster corpses. Supposedly, this Azure Skysnake isn't that powerful, but we need to beware of its innate ability. Don't let it use the Void Blink technique to escape."

"Naturally." The white-robed Immortal cultivator nodded.

Chapter 16 – The Azure Skysnake and Ji Ning

Within the icy pool inside the cave. The small azure snake was ceaselessly absorbing the frigid energy of the icy pool, using it to nourish the 'demon-ice' in its body. Suddenly, its eyes flickered. It transformed into mist, and then reformed into an azure-robed maiden by the side of the pool. Red lips, ivory teeth, and dark eyes.

"They actually dare come to my place?" The azure-robed maiden muttered, "All I wanted to do was spend some extra time nourishing the demon-ice in my body, and yet they still come to cause trouble. Still, I'm not strong yet. It's not good for me to fight." The azure-robed maiden transformed into mist once more, and a small azure serpent appeared in midair. With a flicker, it disappeared into thin air.

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The white-robed cultivator and gray-robed cultivator were currently advancing stealthily through the cave, searching for any traces of the snake. Suddenly, they saw an azure light flash in the distance. An azure serpent in midair was roaring with anger, "You two human cultivators dare come to my place? You are dead meat!"

The voice echoed and thundered. Rumble...the azure serpent flashed in midair, then disappeared.

"That was the Azure Skysnake monster! It found us." The two Immortal cultivators were instantly shocked. And then, the white-robed cultivator sent mentally, "This Azure Skysnake seems to be quite angry; it's probably going to attack us. Let's respond to its plots with one of our own; let's quietly set down a space-sealing formation in the area! Once it draws near, we will immediately activate the formation, causing it to be unable to flee through Void Blink. Only then will we attack and kill it."

"Alright. Be careful and make sure you set it up stealthily. Don't let it discover you," the gray-robed cultivator sent back.

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Thousands of kilometers away.

"Hahaha, I told those two that they were dead meat, so those two buffoons will definitely plan to fight me there. I'm an Azure Skysnake...my life is quite precious. Why would I fight head on against you two?" The Azure Skysnake continued to blink forward, disappearing once again.

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Ji Ning and Mu Northson were currently mounted on their dragon-headed warship, carrying the many humans towards the place in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains where the Raindragon Guard were stationed.

Tens of thousands of kilometers away from Ning's location. Another ship was present here, with two on this ship as well; one female, the other male. The man was tall, strong, and handsome; it was Eastriver Cloudsoar. The woman was also as beautiful as a flower; her name was Eastriver Snowite.

"Big Brother, it's not too hard to kill Wanxiang monsters. With the two of us working together, in but a single day, we've already killed two of them," Eastriver Snowite said happily.

"Killing two monsters isn't that big a deal. The two of us were lucky; the first monster mountain we chose had two Wanxiang monsters present, and that's exactly the number we needed to kill. By the time the other Wanxiang monsters arrived, we used the Lesser Teleportation Dao-seals to flee." Eastriver Cloudsoar shook his head. "The more important requirement the Raindragon Guard gave us was to survive in the Gaol Mountains's wild marshes for three months...three full months! These marshes are full of danger everywhere. Surviving will be much harder than killing one or two Wanxiang monsters."

Eastriver Snowite said, "Big Brother, didn't you say that the closer we are to the Raindragon Guard, the safer it will be? The monsters stay far away from that place...although we won't be able to enter, we can just find a place close to the encampment and stay for three months."

"Right. Still, we need to be careful," Cloudsoar said. "This place isn't like the clan..."

"I know," Snowite responded.

Right at this moment, another warship flew over from far away. "Eh?" Eastriver Cloudsoar and Eastriver Snowite both turned to look.

"Haha, so it is fellow Daoist Cloudsoar, of the Eastriver clan."

Laughter rang out from the distant warship. Atop the warship was a white-robed man with a graceful bearing. The Eastriver siblings immediately recognized him...this was one of the hundred testees, Northriver Zhou.

"Fellow Daoist Northriver," Eastriver Cloudsoar called back.

"It's quite rare and fortunate that I would be able to encounter you two siblings here, fellow Daoist Cloudsoar. Would you be willing to board this construct-ship of mine and share some wine?" Northriver Zhou laughed.

"Yes!" Eastriver Snowite revealed a smile. But Cloudsoar shook his head. "No. No need." This caused Snowite to look towards her older brother curiously, but Cloudsoar just gave her a glance. Snowite didn't argue.

"If that's the case, then I won't force things." Northriver Zhou was quite straightforward. With a laugh, he said, "I'll leave, then."

But just as his words came out...Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Five streaks of light suddenly flew out towards every direction, moving lightning-fast. These five streaks of light...were five Wanxiang Adepts, all of them amongst the testees for joining the

Raindragon Guard. The bodies of the five Wanxiang Adepts all emanated a blurry gray light, and the body of Northriver Zhou, still standing atop that warship, also shone with that light.

Six of them in total! The gray lights were all connected, surrounding this region. "A spacialock formation!" The faces of Eastriver Cloudsoar and Eastriver Snowite completely changed.

"You...you..." Cloudsoar's face was ashen as he stared at the six surrounding Immortal cultivators. "Dong One of Snowdragon Mountain, Xu Manquan of the Thousand Rivers Sect, Northriver Zhou of the Skysplitter Sword Sect...you actually prepared a spacialock formation."

Lesser Teleportation Dao-seals were only useful against Zifu Disciples and ordinary Wanxiang Adepts. The majority of powerful Wanxiang Adepts would carry a spacialock formation with them. Once they set it down...there would be no way to teleport within the region with locked space.

"Four peak Wanxiang Adepts, two late Wanxiang Adepts." Cloudsoar and Snowite exchanged a glance, despair in their eyes.

"Kill them." A cold look flashed through Northriver Zhou's eyes.

"Kill!"

Cloudsoar and Snowite went berserk as well.

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"I, Eastriver Cloudsoar, will definitely get revenge! Definitely!!!" A desolate, fierce, hate-filled cry rang out from far away. Eastriver Cloudsoar, who had charged outside of the spacialock formation, his body covered in blood and missing an arm, immediately used his Lesser Teleportation Dao-seal and disappeared. As for his little sister, she was already dead.

After all, these two siblings weren't faced against Wanxiang monsters

who didn't have any legacies or treasures; they faced human Wanxiang elites who were also from famous tribes and clans!

Four peak Wanxiang Adepts, two late Wanxiang Adepts. Upon joining forces, they were absolutely able to crush the two of them.

"That Eastriver Cloudsoar managed to escape." Northriver Zhou shook his head. "He should consider himself lucky." The other five flew back to the warship, while Zhou picked up the magic storage belt of the slain Snowite, beginning to look through it.

"How is it?" The others asked. "Not bad. There's the corpse of a Wanxiang monster here." Northriver Zhou handed the magic storage belt to someone next to him, letting them all look through it. Although the six of them had joined forces to support each other in killing others, and although they had sworn an oath to the Dao of the Heavens, they all still wanted to look through the spoils of war.

Northriver Zhou laughed. "Three months. It'll definitely be quite easy for us to find six Wanxiang monster corpses."

"Right.." The golden-robed Dong One smiled and nodded. "Those Immortal cultivators who slew Wanxiang monsters will most likely all return to move close to the Raindragon Guards. As long as we patrol this area...we'll definitely run into more. Any we run into, we kill!"

"We'll keep doing this, then." All of them were filled with eagerness. Upon killing cultivators, not only would they acquire Wanxiang monster corpses, they would also be able to obtain the magic treasures of those cultivators. This was far more profitable than just killing monsters.

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"I, Eastriver Cloudswear, swear that I will definitely kill them." Cloudsoar appeared in midair, covered in blood. His eyes were filled with hate. "Northriver Zhou. Xu Manquan. Dong One..." Cloudsoar gritted his name as he recited the names, one after the other, as

though he was storing them deep into his memory.

"Little sister...little sister." Cloudsoar's tears began to fall. He had known all along that the path of Immortals was an incomparably dangerous one, but who would have thought that on his very first true adventure, his little sister would die? This caused Cloudsoar, who had been excited and eager, to become filled with boundless pain and hate.

He knew that Wanxiang Adepts often killed each other, and that the seniors of their clans wouldn't generally intervene. Only if, say, a Primal Daoist had acted against a Wanxiang Adept, which would be a case of a senior bullying a junior, would the seniors of the sect intervene. So long as the fights were amongst those of the same generation...if you died, you could only blame yourself for being weak!

But of course, if the person who died was a junior who was particularly beloved by a powerful figure, such as the sole disciple of someone...then the powerful figure might go berserk and ignore protocol to gain revenge for that junior.

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Ning and Northson road atop the warship, constantly advancing towards the Raindragon Guard's encampment.

"Senior apprentice-brother Ji Ning." Northson stared at those terrified, restless humans, then said softly, "They are still terrified and uneasy. Even now...they are still afraid of us. Only the children have a bit more courage."

"They've been enslaved for too long." Ning shook his head. "Slavery has rooted itself within them. To change that will be very, very hard. The children have some hope."

Northson looked at the first child they had saved. Smiling, he walked over to them. Next to the child was a grimy-looking woman. Terrified,

she immediately pulled her son away, but her son was fearless. He just looked at Northson.

"Kid, what's your name?" Northson said. "My name is Ironboy!" The child raised his head and said, "What are your names, Immortals?"

Northson laughed. "My name is Mu Northson. Over there is my senior apprentice-brother, Ji Ning."

"Mu Northson. Ji Ning..." The child gently murmured the names, as though memorizing them.

Ning laughed and walked over as well. "This Ironboy is quite clever."

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As Ning and Northson were chatting with the kid, a distant ship was beginning to draw close to theirs.

"Look. That dragon-headed warship." Northriver Zhou pointed towards the distance. "If memory serves, that dragon-headed warship belongs to one of the hundred, that Black-White College disciple, Mu Northson; it's the construct-warship he displayed. Most likely, Mu Northson and his senior apprentice-brother are on that ship."

"The Black-White College?"

"Every member of the Black-White College is a peerless genius. They aren't easy to deal with."

"Should we attack?"

These people began to hesitate. But the golden-robed Dong One said, "No need to worry. I understand this Ji Ning quite well. He should only be twenty years old! Although his talent is astonishing, he's trained for too short a period of time. You should all be aware that his [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] is only at the ninth stage. He's a bit dangerous in close combat, but as long as we

can stay away from him, we don't need to fear him at all. As for that Mu Northson, since he follows this Ji Ning's lead, his strength probably isn't that great either."

"The two of them are headed back...they probably have the corpses of two Wanxiang monster."

"Disciples of the Black-White College. Killing them is worth more than killing quite a few Wanxiang Adepts. In addition, one of them is a middle-stage Wanxiang Adept, while the other is a Fiendgod Body Refiner who can just barely be considered an early-stage Wanxiang Adept. Us? Four of us are peak Wanxiang Adepts, while the other two are late-stage, and we can join together in a six-man formation attack."

"Given that we're plotting against them while they aren't against us, we have excellent chances."

Soon, the six came to a unified agreement. "Let's go. Let's kill these two 'peerless geniuses' of the Black-White College!" Northriver Zhou's eyes flashed with a savage light.

Chapter 17 – Waylaying the Disciples of the Black-White College

A youth with loose, unbound hair said in a low voice, “We are definitely going to kill them, but don’t forget...earlier, when the six of us joined forces against those two siblings of the Eastriver clan...the final result was that Eastriver Cloudsoar escaped! These two are of the Black-White College. Although one is a middle-stage Wanxiang Adept and the other can be considered an early-stage Fiendgod Wanxiang Adept, they certainly are carrying many protective magic treasures. If we aren’t careful...the two of them might end up escaping in the end. The final result would be, not only would they remain alive, we would have created enemies for ourselves.

“Senior apprentice-brother Jihe’s words are correct.” The golden-robed Dong One nodded. “There exists some enmity between Ji Ning and my Snowdragon Mountain, and I am quite familiar with him. He is a truly monstrous talent, and his training speed is astonishing. If he were to escape, we would definitely gain a powerful foe.”

Although they were considering the matter, in reality, none of these six Wanxiang Adepts were truly afraid of creating enemies. Since they had decided to embark on the path of cultivation, then they would strive to do anything necessary to become Immortals!

“We need to carefully consider how to go about this,” said the only woman of the group. “If we are going to attack, we must instantly use the most vicious attacks we have and kill them before they have a chance to react.”

“My suggestion is...”

The six cultivators chatted amongst themselves. If the enemy was a Wanxiang monster, this would be very simple, but the enemy were disciples of the Black-White College. Even though they were just a middle-stage Wanxiang Adept and the equivalent of an early-stage Wanxiang Adept, they didn’t dare to be the slightest bit overconfident. The disciples of the Black-White College couldn’t be

judged in accordance with normal logic. If these two were both peak Wanxiang Adepts, the six of them probably wouldn't choose to attack at all.

"We have higher foundations than them, and we are working together. I refuse to believe we won't be able to kill them." This was what the six cultivators all believed, and the reason why they decided to act.

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Ning didn't notice any of this at all. He continued to chat with his junior apprentice-brother about the disciples. But right at this moment...

"Eh?" Ning turned to look. He stared past the railing, to a distant warship flying over from afar. "This warship...this seems to be the construct-warship which that Northriver Zhou of the Skysplitter Sword Sect used, when the hundred of us dispersed in different directions.

Immortal cultivators had astonishingly good memories. Ning had clearly memorized all of the names of the hundred, when they had reported them to the Immortal.

"Senior apprentice-brother, that's the warship of Northriver Zhou of the Skysplitter Sword Sect," Northson said softly as well. "Right." Ning nodded, staring into the distance. That ship was drawing closer and closer to them...why?

"Hahaha..." An elegant, refined-looking white-robed man was standing at the helm of the warship, staring towards them. Laughing, the man said, "I didn't expect that I'd encounter the two disciples of the Black-White College here. Northriver Zhou pays his respects."

"It is quite a coincidence," Ning said with a laugh. "It seems, fellow Daoist Northriver, that you've already acquired a Wanxiang monster corpse." If another treated him with courtesy and a smile, unless there was enmity or grievances between Ning and that person, Ning

wouldn't treat them with a cold face either.

"It was luck," Northriver Zhou said warmly. "It's quite lucky for us to encounter each other here. Why don't you come aboard my vessel, and we can drink some wine together?"

"Drink some wine together?" Ning had a sudden thought. If it was just a matter of chatting and drinking, that was one thing. But inviting them aboard his warship...Ning began to grow nervous. After all, that was someone else's territory. With but a thought, he instantly filled the area with his powerful divine sense. He saw with perfect clarity the insides of that warship. Ning was instantly shocked. There were five figures hidden within the warship.

"Everyone, be alert. Once this Ji Ning and Mu Northson board the ship, we'll immediately activate the grand formation. We need to kill them right away."

"Right. As time goes on, the situation might change. We have to make it fast."

"As soon as they board the ship, they'll be dead."

All of them were stealthily chatting amongst themselves. This was a construct-ship that was filled with restrictive spells to begin with, and so those in the outside world couldn't hear the conversations going on within at all. Only Ning, capable of a divine sense, was able to discover everything.

"They are going to waylay and kill us!" This instantly came to Ning's mind. "I didn't imagine that we'd encounter this as soon as we arrived at the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains."

"Senior apprentice-brother, shall we go?" Northson looked towards Ning. He was rather thin-skinned; he found it hard to refuse someone who had invited him over in such a friendly manner.

"Junior apprentice-brother," Ning hurriedly sent mentally, "Be careful and don't reveal anything, but...that warship has five other Wanxiang

Adepts hidden within it. All of them are amongst the testees for joining the Raindragon Guard. Adding in Northriver Zhou, there are six in total. Four are peak Wanxiang Adepts, while two are late Wanxiang Adepts."

"What?" It was a good thing that Ning had warned him; although on the surface, Northson pretended to remain calm, in his heart, he was shocked. He sent back, "Senior apprentice-brother, six Immortal cultivators? Why haven't the other five shown themselves? Can it be that they are..."

"Right. They are going to rob and kill us," Ning replied. Northson was enraged. "They actually dare to try to pull that on us? Let's counter-kill them."

"Careful," Ning sent back. "Don't underestimate them. They aren't like those Wanxiang monsters; they are from top-tier clans and tribes as well, and their techniques will definitely be extraordinary. And, with six of them joining forces...if we aren't careful, we might perish."

Ning was quite confident about himself, actually; he was a Fiendgod Body Refiner, and his life force was incredibly strong. In addition, with his ultimate secret weapon, the divine ability [Starseizing Hand] ...yes, Ning felt quite confident. However, Northson was still just a middle Wanxiang Adept. In terms of elemental ki, he was far inferior to the others. In addition, Northson was just eighteen, and in a true, chaotic battle, Ning wouldn't necessarily be able to take care of this junior apprentice-brother of his. If his junior apprentice-brother died here, Ning would never be able to forgive himself.

"Understood." Northson immediately increased his own level of caution as well. "Stay next to me," Ning sent to him. "Don't make any sudden movements. Wait for my commands."

"Alright," Northson acknowledged.

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While the two fellow disciples decided through their private mental messages as to what they would do, opposite them, Northriver Zhou continued to smile at them and wait for their response. At the same time, he even said, "I've always been quite filled with admiration towards the many students of the Black-White College. It is my good fortune to be able to meet you two fellow Daoists today."

"I'm ashamed to say this," Ning said apologetically, "But we're busy. We won't go over for now. After we all complete the test to join the Raindragon Guard, we'll drink together."

"Oh." Northriver Zhou cursed in his heart, but on the surface, he put on an 'understanding' look. "I understand. Then let us wait to meet with each other after we join the Raindragon guard." But at the same time, he sent mentally, "Attack!"

The five cultivators within the ship, upon hearing this, exchanged glances and nodded. They all immediately rushed outside. Only...

Ji Ning was even faster than them!

Ning had noticed through his divine sense that the five Immortal cultivators within the ship had looked at each other and nodded, and were moving to charge outside. He immediately willed his 720 Mortal-ranked flying swords to appear in midair. "Junior apprentice-brother, attack."

At that moment, two giant black water-snakes appeared around Northson. The bodies of the black water-snakes constantly flickered in an illusory manner, and began to form into sharp spike that were covered by many runic seals. The auras of the water-snakes immediately began to grow savage and brutal.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Five figures moved lightning-fast, charging outside of the ship, their bodies already flashing with that blurry gray light. The spacialock formation was already beginning to take shape. This was a formation

which used six Immortal cultivators as the formation-base, and the area covered by the six cultivators would be the area locked in by the formation. But of course, there was a maximum size of just a hundred kilometers or so.

"What's going on?" Northriver Zhou, Dong One, and the others discovered to their astonishment that Ji Ning and Mu Northson had actually acted even before they did.

"Kill them."

"They found us out."

"Don't hold anything back."

Northriver Zhou's group reacted right away as well, and they immediately unleashed their most powerful attacks. The six of them shared their elemental ki through the formation, and their power burst forth.

"Massive Ice Prison." The golden-robed Dong One pointed towards the distance. Whoosh! A white, freezing aura that was visible to the naked eye swept towards Ning. Ning and Northson were both standing in the air above the dragon-headed warship, which was now completely closed off to the outside world. Clearly, Ning and Northson didn't wish to cause any disasters to befall these slaves. Actually, if it wasn't for these slaves, Ning and Northson could've just fled through using Lesser Teleportation Dao-seals.

Still...the slaves were just one reason. The second was because both of them had just departed from their schools, and they had proud hearts; why would they flee without even fighting? Thus, the two didn't even discuss fleeing. In their minds was a single word – Fight!

"It's dire-ice! This Dong One of Snowdragon Mountain actually was cultivating demon-ice in his body." Ning was startled. The inner Zifu of a practitioner was an incomparably mysterious place. It could nourish dire-ice, or earthfire, or demonwind...these were all

extremely terrifying natural elemental powers, and after being nourished in the body, they would be able to unleash extremely great might.

However, to nourish dire-ice, one would first need to find a secret location where naturally-occurring dire-ice was, and then absorb it into the body. One could only hope for but not count on encountering such a valuable location. The power of this dire-ice, however, was absolutely not lower than a divine ability's.

"Grand Windmill Formation!" The black-clothed Xu Manquan pointed towards the distant Ning and Northson. Instantly, nine windmills suddenly appeared and began to spin at high speed in the air, transforming into tornado windmills which crushed the air itself as it smashed towards the two.

"Anatta Sword!" Their leader, Northriver Zhou, made nine flying swords appear before him. They simultaneously struck out, and as they did, nine rivers of sword light appeared, sweeping towards Ning and Northson.

"Nirvana Extinction!" Jihe crossed his hands together, and out of nowhere, a gray energy aura appeared which swept towards Ning and Northson.

"Die." Adept Nongsan let out a cold laugh, then waved his hand. The horsetail whisk in his hands immediately transformed into three thousand white strands, filling the skies as they swept forward.

"Haaaa!" The only woman, Meng Liuqing, crushed a Dao-seal and let out a cold roar. Bang! Countless rays of lightning appeared in midair, striking downwards towards Ning and Northson.

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In an instant, the six Wanxiang Adepts had simultaneously used the most vicious techniques available to them. They weren't itinerant cultivators with no secret arts at their disposals; they were mighty

Daoists who had some truly ancient, mysterious techniques.

"Waterflame Lotus!"

"[Three-Foot Sword] – Manifold Thistlethorns!"

An utterly beautiful, enormous blooming lotus flower spread open, with Ning and Northson completely surrounded by it. Ning was holding the Darknorth swords in his hands, just in case, but at the same time, he used the ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] to execute Ning's most powerful sword technique – the second stance of the [Three-Foot Sword].

"Serpents Swallow the Skies." Northson's two hands moved, and the giant, savage black water-snakes that had latched onto each other's tails suddenly transformed into an enormous black circle. Carrying an inexhaustible, terrifying devouring power, it swept forward.

Chapter 18 – Sweeping Through All Opposition

The bolts of lightning struck down at astonishing speed, instantly colliding with the gigantic Waterflame Lotus surrounding Ning and Northson. The petals of the Waterflame Lotus were blooming in layers, and after breaking through three layers of petals, the lightning dissipated, completely unable to harm Ning or Northson at all.

“It actually broke through three layers.” Ning was secretly shocked. In the past three years, Ning had made the most accomplishments in the Dao of Rainwater and the Dao of the Inferno. Every so often, he would go meditate before the Black-White Diagram...and he was now capable of instantly creating and maintaining six layers of petals. If the enemy’s attacks were twice as powerful, they would’ve broken through.

Although Ning was surprised, he saw that the first attacks arriving from far away were those nine tornado windmills.

“Manifold Thistlethorns!” The jade-white sword of light flew out at a seemingly slow speed, as though it was being bound by countless things, which it was just barely able to break through, one layer at a time.

Wherever the jade-white sword of light flew past...the aura it brought with it was enough to cause the faces of Northriver Zhou, Jihe, Dong One, and the other Wanxiang Adepts to change, once they sensed it.

“Who the hell was it that claimed Ji Ning is only skilled in close combat?!” Northriver Zhou and the others were all cursing in their hearts.

The impending sword-light immediately chopped apart the impending dire-ice. Next, it collided against the nine tornado windmills that were flying through the air. Rumble...the nine tornado

windmills had aroused an endless tempest, and the nine had immediately formed into a formation which jointly resisted that single jade-white sword of light, but the sword was simply too fast. They could clearly sense it and see it, but its speed vastly surpassed that of any of the windmills.

A few seconds after a thunderous collision, the nine windmills were all knocked flying away, but the jade-white sword-light had also grown incomparably dim. "Crunch." In front of the three thousand white strands of the horsetail whisk, the jade-white sword light completely vanished.

"Formidable. He was actually able to first break through Dong One's 'dire-ice', then break the 'Grand Windmill Formation' of myself, Xu Manquan."

"If he's so powerful when controlling sword-light...we absolutely cannot let him get into close range!"

Northriver Zhou and the others were all shocked. What they didn't realize was that Ning felt shocked as well. "My [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] is already essentially as powerful as an attack at the Zifu level can be, and it executed the second stance of the [Three-Foot Sword]. And yet, it was only just barely able to defeat two of their attacks? It appears that my power base is too weak; Xu Manquan and Dong One are both peak Wanxiang Adepts, after all."

Of the two, one had used dire-ice, something comparable to a divine ability; the other had used a grand formation. And both were at the peak Wanxiang Adept level! Despite that, both of their attacks had been defeated by Ning, a single person. Actually, Ning's performance was already quite monstrous.

"Serpents Swallow the Skies!"

"Anatta Sword!"

The two black serpents with linked heads and tails had formed into

an enormous circle, and they swept towards those nine streaks of sword-light. As for the nine rivers of sword-light controlled by Northriver Zhou, they swept forward like nine mighty floods, wildly attacking that water-snake circle.

For the moment, the battle was actually at a stalemate.

“These two of the Black-White College truly are powerful. They are so much weaker than us in terms of their base of power, but they are able to resist our attacks nonetheless.” Dong One sent hurriedly with a shout, “Everyone, work together and annihilate them.”

“Kill.”

“Kill!”

Meng Liuqing, Nongsan, and the others used their full strength, not daring to be the slightest bit negligent.

“Eh?” Ning suddenly realized that the gray energy flooding towards him actually was capable of somewhat affecting the soul. Although he didn’t care about it, due to the power of his soul, his junior apprentice-brother would be affected by it. Indeed, the nearby Northson had a frown on his face, and the power of the black serpent constructs which he was controlling had begun to drop. Clearly, his mental equilibrium had been affected.

“Die, then.” Ning’s eyes suddenly exploded with a terrifying killing intent. His divine soul was seated in the lotus position deep within his sea of consciousness. In front of his chest, an azure runic seal suddenly formed; the Soulshaker Seal! His powerful divine sense poured out through the Soulshaker Seal and spread out, thundering out like the waves of the sea in multiple layered waves, surging rapidly towards every direction.

It completely avoided the nearby Northson, crushing down towards everyone else. The rolling waves of powerful divine sense instantly crashed against the six Wanxiang Adepts surrounding them. It was

as though mighty, savage waves which had been building up power for a long time had suddenly crashed against the shore.

BOOM!!!

The powerful divine sense instantly exploded with inconceivable concussive power.

"What is..." The Wanxiang Adept of Snowdragon Mountain, Dong One, only felt a terrifying collusive power smash towards him. He was instantly terrified, but then...his mind went blank.

"This..."

"I..."

These mighty Wanxiang Adepts, in the face of Ning's [Soulshaker Art], were instantly stunned and dazed.

Actually, the [Soulshaker Art] was only a technique capable of shaking the opponent's soul and affecting their power. Generally speaking, it wouldn't cause others to fall into this dazed, stunned state. The chief reason it did right now was because Ning's divine soul had already the 'divine sense' level. It was comparable to a Primal Daoist using the technique; naturally, it caused them all to enter a stupor. The six of them even began to slowly sink down from the skies.

"Kill!" Ning willed it, and instantly, the jade-white sword of light of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] appeared once more, sweeping towards the enemies. "Junior apprentice-brother, hurry and attack," Ning sent.

"Understood." Northson realized that the six Wanxiang Adepts had entered a dazed, stunned state as well.

The first person to be struck by the jade-white sword light was the leader, Northriver Zhou. "BANG!" Northriver Zhou's body suddenly unleashed a barrier of sword-ki. This sword-ki was incomparably

resilient, and it was able to withstand Ning's jade-white sword attack.

"Protective sword-ki?" Ning was startled. "It must be a protective item which the elders of his school provide him with."

In the instant that he was struck, Northriver Zhou came to his senses, and a look of terror appeared on his face.

"Kill! Kill! Kill!" The jade-white sword-light of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] chopped three times in a row against that protective sword-ki. Northriver Zhou, who had just come to his senses and didn't have the chance to begin controlling his magic treasures, was thus bisected by Ning's sword chop.

Crack, crack, crack...Northson's black serpent-circle immediately crushed down around the one named 'Jihe'. This Jihe actually didn't have a protective item on him.

By now, the other four Wanxiang Adepts came to their senses. They were still late stage Wanxiang Adepts and peak Wanxiang nAdepts, after all; their souls were extremely strong, and their Dao-hearts resilient. Even for Primal Daoists who used the [Soulshaker Art], to be able to send them into a stupor for a moment was already impressive.

"Not good. Jihe and Northriver Zhou are already dead."

"Quick, flee."

"They know a powerful divine will technique."

The four lucky survivors, being Dong One, Meng Liuqing, Nongsan, and Xu Manquan, were all terrified and immediately fled. Two of them had died in an instant; this extinguished any thoughts they had of fighting back. They now understand that one of these two disciples of the Black-White College was in possession of an extremely powerful divine will technique. Still, they were also incomparably puzzled; although divine will techniques were rare, they weren't invincible. Only someone with an extremely strong

divine soul would be powerful when using a divine will technique, and clearly, these two had only trained for a short period of time. How could they be so powerful?"

"Flee?" Ning let out a cold laugh. BANG! His mighty divine will once more spread out in every direction, like the crushing waves of the sea. Although all of the four fleeing individuals were prepared this time, they were still dazed by the powerful divine will, and their speed lessened.

"Junior apprentice-brother, kill them." Ning, his Darknorth swords in his hands, charged straight towards Dong One of Snowdragon Mountain. At the same time, he controlled his sword-light of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] to attack that Xu Manquan.

"Understood." Northson's black serpent circle instantly broke apart, transforming back into two giant water-snakes which attacked Nongsan and Meng Liuqing.

"[Soulshaker Art]!"

Ning used the [Soulshaker Art] yet again, and ripples of endless, ceaseless waves of energy swept towards those four Wanxiang Adepts.

"Snowdragon Mountain, eh? Die!" The Darknorth swords in Ning's hands sliced out as two streaks of light, bisecting Dong One. "BANG!" Dong One's body emanated a black energy which formed in protective layers, protecting him like a cocoon.

"Bang!" Ning launched yet another attack, but still wasn't able to break through. Dong One gritted his teeth, still under assault by the clashing waves of Ning's divine will. He gritted his teeth so hard that blood came out from them, and his eyes were bloodshot and crazed. He felt like a person who was drowning in a lake of waves of divine will. However, his powerful Dao-heart caused him to want to remain alive.

"Ignite!" Dong One, just barely managing to remain conscious, executed the Blood Evasion technique. Whoosh! A dazzling, bloody scarlet light suddenly appeared in the skies, and then he disappeared into the distance.

"Swish." Xu Manquan, pursued by the sword-light of Ning's [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], had barely managed to remain conscious as well, but he hadn't been able to flee. He was killed by the sword-light.

"One escaped." Ning shook his head, collecting the corpses that were falling down from the skies. Ning turned to look. Northson was flying towards him. Northson said resignedly, "Senior apprentice-brother, I let that Meng Liuqing get away. However, I did kill that Nongsan."

"Out of six, we killed four." Ning laughed. "Not bad."

"What do you mean, 'not bad'? We did extremely well!" Northson stared at Ning in astonishment. "Senior apprentice-brother, what technique did you use just now? I saw them enter a dazed state. It should've been a divine will technique, right? Our Black-White College only has three divine will techniques; the [Soulshaker Art], the [Soulcharmer Art], and the [Soulslayer Art]. Which one did you use?"

"The [Soulshaker Art], of course." Ning didn't try to hide it. "Formidable," Northson said, "Formidable. Senior apprentice-brother, your soul is at the divine sense level! The power of your [Soulshaker Art] is astonishing; you were able to make them completely unable to fight back. Actually, they were quite powerful; they were all roughly on par with me." Northson sighed in amazement. "I really haven't trained long enough."

"Let's see what they left behind," Ning said. "Alright." Northson was filled with eagerness as well.

The two first flew back to the dragon-headed warship. The slaves aboard the dragon-headed warship were all quite terrified; they had

no idea what had just happened outside.

Ning and Northson paid them no heed. Instead, they began to hurriedly bind the storage-type magic treasures. Although the four they had killed were Wanxiang Adepts, their storage-type magic treasures weren't all Earth-ranked. Three were Mortal-ranked, while only one was Earth-ranked. It actually didn't make a huge difference if the storage-type treasures were Earth-ranked or not; thus, not many Immortal cultivators would actively go about upgrading them.

A few moments later...

"Senior apprentice-brother, whose magic treasure was this? It has so much liquefied elemental essence; this bottle has to have at least 250 kilograms!" Northson was instantly overjoyed upon discovering this.

Ning, upon hearing this, was delighted as well. 250 kilograms? So much! Ning quickly understood. "Most likely, after training to the peak of the Wanxiang Adept level, he was preparing to use it to break through to become a Primal Daoist. To break through to the Primal Daoist level would require tremendous amounts of liquefied elemental essence. 250 kilograms is just a rounding error."

"Makes sense." Northson nodded.

But Ning was quite eager; they had discovered 250 kilograms of liquefied elemental essence in the storage-type magic treasure of just a single Wanxiang Adept. Perhaps, as a result of othis encounter, Ning would be able to breakthrough to become a Wanxiang Adept himself!

Chapter 19 – Breakthrough, Wanxiang Adept

Ji Ning and Mu Northson continued to bind the storage treasures to see what items the four Wanxiang Adepts they had killed had left behind. Immortal cultivators would often carry their most important treasures with them! This was because it would be safest when they were holding onto them personally. And, of course, if they were to die, the treasures would become of no value to them. Thus, cultivators generally carried their treasures with them.

“We’ve bound them all.” Northson let out a long sigh. “All of them were quite ‘fat,’” Ning said with a laugh. “Killing a single cultivator really is far more rewarding than killing a Wanxiang monster.”

Although Wanxiang monsters also relied on formations and alliances to occasionally kill cultivators, they would generally trade those magic treasures of the slain cultivators for liquefied elemental essence and some particular items they needed. Thus, when Ning’s group had killed those three Wanxiang monsters, they hadn’t acquired that much from them.

“Northriver Zhou, Xu Manquan, Nongsan, Jihe.” Northson sighed. “Most of them had formation-type treasures. Those nine Earth-ranked flying swords of Northriver Zhou...I imagine those are all Earth-ranked high-grade flying swords.”

“Right.” Ning nodded. “These were all fairly formidable figures amongst Wanxiang Adepts. Their magic treasures are extraordinary.” The Adept Xu Li who Ning had killed in the past had carried quite ordinary Earth-ranked magic treasures. He was merely a low-level figure amongst Wanxiang Adepts; by contrast, Northriver Zhou and the others were top-level figures.

“In total, 33 Earth-ranked magic treasures. No need to count the Mortal-ranked ones. These treasures are most likely worth around 1000 or 1500 kilograms of liquefied elemental essence.” Northson was quite excited. “They also have Dao-seals like these Lesser Teleportation Dao-seals, and some formations, spirit-pills...and

liquefied elemental essence! These four Wanxiang Adepts have, in total, 900 kilograms of it! Senior apprentice-brother, you are still at the peak Zifu level; the liquefied elemental essence will be yours. With them, I imagine you will be able to smash through to the early Wanxiang stage at one blow. By then, your power will increase dramatically."

Ning said, "No rush. Junior apprentice-brother, you need to increase your power as well." But Northson shook his head, then said resignedly, "Even if you gave me all 900 kilograms, it's hard to say whether or not I'd be able to break through to the late Wanxiang stage."

Ning was startled, but after thinking over it, he nodded slightly. Indeed, it would be hard to say. When Immortal cultivators rose in power to a completely new stage, the amount of elemental ki they would have to absorb would also increase tenfold, or perhaps even tens of times. Although it might only take 500 kilograms to go from the early Zifu stage to the early Wanxiang stage, from the early Wanxiang stage, it might take tens of thousands of kilograms to reach the early Primal Daoist stage!

The early Primal Daoist stage, in turn, would probably need hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of kilograms in order to reach the early Earth Immortal stage!

Tens of thousands vs hundreds of thousands? How incredible was this? Even major schools or sects would at most be willing to squander a bit of liquefied elemental essence on powerful Zifu-stage disciples. Once they reached the Wanxiang Adept or Primal Daoist stages...one had to simply train slowly. Even some truly supreme, monstrous geniuses would at most be given a bit of help by their clans. It would be incredible for the clans to be willing to part with a few tens of thousands of kilograms. Hundreds of thousands of kilograms? Not even Immortals would be able to bring out that much!

"Senior apprentice-brother, hurry up and make your breakthrough,"

Northson urged. "Once you break through to the early Wanxiang stage, the rate at which you are able to absorb elemental ki will explosively increase by tens of times. By then, a single year's worth of training would probably be equivalent to using hundreds of kilograms of liquefied elemental essence."

"Fine, then." Ning nodded. "I'll accept the liquefied elemental essence, but you take the magic treasures, junior apprentice-brother." Northson said, delighted, "Fine, fine, fine. I won't refuse."

The two made a simple division; the various magic treasures would go to Northson, while the liquefied elemental essence went to Ning. As for the Dao-seals, spirit-pills, and other items, the two divided them equally.

Although it seemed as though Northson was at a bit of advantage in terms of value, these were the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains, after all; if he was to trade for liquefied elemental essence, he would first have to go back to the Crimson Dragon Mountains. Thus... comparatively speaking, Ning was a bit better off. Ning understood this, and he quietly memorized this event.

"Up ahead is the place where the Raindragon Guard is stationed." Ning walked to the helm of the warship, staring through the sparse clouds to the distant lands below. "After we deliver these slaves to them, we'll find a place where I can quietly absorb this liquefied elemental essence."

"Alright." Northson nodded.

.....

The Raindragon Guard encampment within the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains. This was a towering mountain, and there were estates erected throughout it. Quite a few Raindragon Guards were present here.

The dragon-headed warship hovered there in midair, slowly drawing

closer to the mountain peak.

"Hurry and depart." A black-robed elder stood there in midair, appearing in front of the dragon-headed warship. He said furiously, "The two of you have come here to participate in the trial to join the Raindragon Guard. You are forbidden from entering. After you enter this encampment, you will have failed the test."

Ning and Northson immediately saluted with respect. They could sense that this black-robed elder's aura...seemed quite similar to the aura the Primal Daoists of the Black-White College possessed.

"Ji Ning [Mu Northson] greets you, senior," the two said respectfully.

"No point in being respectful. Hurry up and depart." The black-robed elder waved his arm.

Ning persisted in saying, "Senior, we haven't come here to enter the encampment. We've come because earlier, when we two brothers went to deal with Wanxiang monsters atop a monster mountain, we discovered a group of pitiable humans who were being raised as livestock. Thus, we delivered them here in the hopes that the Raindragon Guard will take pity on and care of them."

The black-robed elder was startled. A look of rage appeared on his face. "These monsters...they never learn the error of their ways." He looked towards Ning and Northson with a slightly kinder look in his eyes now. "Bring these slaves out. Release them and let me look at them."

"Yes," Ning and Northson said respectfully. Instantly, they opened the doors to the warship, and the group of slaves that had been eating and drinking within the warm cabins stared outwards in terror.

The look on the black-robed elder's face grew even uglier to behold, upon seeing those human slaves clad in leaves and in bark, who had terrified looks in their eyes. He let out a soft sigh. "There is no hope

for most of these slaves. Some of the children, perhaps. These humans who were treated as meat by the monsters...their lives are incomparably terrible, generation after generation. Now that they have escaped their tribulations, the Raindragon Guard will naturally take care of them. Hand them over to me. The two of you shall continue within the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains. After three months time, you may return."

"Yes." Ning and Northson were both overjoyed. Previously, they were afraid that the Raindragon Guard wouldn't take care of them, but now, it seemed, the Raindragon Guard was quite benevolent towards these human slaves who had been reared as livestock by the monsters.

A short time later. The black-robed Primal Daoist elder had led away all the human slaves. The child who Ning and Northson was the most familiar with, the one called 'Ironboy', had stared at the two of them the entire time, as though wanting to completely memorize their faces.

"I wonder what will happen to him in the future," Northson said softly, a complicated look in his eyes. "Everyone has their own destiny," Ning said. "Let's go."

"Alright." Northson nodded.

The two disciples once more boarded the dragon-headed warship, quickly departing the encampment region and beginning to once more head deep into the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains.

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Half a day later. It was already night.

Ning and Northson had chosen a desolate mountain with no monsters present. Ning's divine sense had inspected the entire mountain, but hadn't found any monsters at all. Thus, they entered a cave which was deep within the mountain.

Within the cave, there was a flowing underground river. The two set up a grand alarm formation, and Northson also arranged for some constructs to stand guard alongside himself.

"Senior apprentice-brother, focus on your training. Leave everything here to me. I won't even let an ant crawl in," Northson chortled. Ning laughed. "Sorry for the trouble, junior apprentice-brother."

Then, no longer thinking about anything else, Ning immediately sat down into the lotus position atop a flat rock he had chopped apart with his Darknorth sword. A jade bottle appeared next to him. Within this jade bottle was the liquefied elemental essence of all four Wanxiang Adepts; a total of 900 kilograms of it.

"Whew!" Ning opened his mouth, and the liquefied elemental essence began to flow out, directly entering Ning's mouth.

Within Ning's Zifu Violet Palace region. The liquefied elemental essence began to frantically transform. His entire Zifu Sea was swiveling slightly, because at the very base of the Zifu Sea large amount of pure elemental ki was flowing out from the Watersource. The Zifu Sea...it continuously expanded in each direction, taking up more and more of the space in this region.

50 kilograms. 150 kilograms. 250 kilograms. 300 kilograms!

Ning continued to absorb more and more.

"Eh? Previously, in the Black-White College, I absorbed 405 kilograms. Afterwards, I spent three years in training. Those three years should be roughly equivalent to fifty or a hundred kilograms as well. In other words, my body should've had nearly 500 kilograms." Ning pondered to himself. "And now, I've absorbed 300 more, but I still haven't reached my limit."

"Let's wait and see. I want to see exactly how much my Zifu Lake can expand to." Ning didn't hesitate at all, continuing to ceaselessly absorb liquefied elemental essence. The Zifu Sea within his body

was constantly expanding, taking up more of the space of the void. The entire Zifu Violet Palace region was growing sturdier and sturdier as well.

350 kilograms. 400 kilograms. 450 kilograms...

"Master's previous guess was that I would roughly need to absorb around 800 to 850 kilograms or so, but I've already...wow, a thousand kilograms." Ning's former Zifu Sea had held roughly 500 kilograms worth of liquefied elemental essence, but now he had absorbed 500 more. And yet, Ning still didn't feel as though he had reached his limit.

"Come. Continue."

Slowly, the rate at which his Zifu Sea expanded began to slow down, as though it was beginning to reach its limits. The surrounding void had begun to generate a shocking resistive power, preventing the Zifu Sea from expanding much more.

Rumble...

The entire Violet Palace was beginning to tremble. The Zifu Lake was no longer able to expand by another inch. The entire Violet Palace region was now incomparably sturdy.

Ning understood that his Zifu Sea had finally reached its limits. Factoring in his previous accumulated energy and this time's absorption...he had actually taken in the equivalent of 1250 kilograms of liquefied elemental essence!

"No matter what, my peak Zifu stage is definitely at a true peak now," Ning mused silently to himself. "I can now break through to the early Wanxiang stage." Actually, he could've broken through three years ago, but his base wasn't stable and solid enough. Ning was a person of great ambition; naturally, he had insisted on waiting until today.

Ning began to mentally recite the words from the [Flowing Watersource] describing the process of breaking through to the

Wanxiang Adept stage.

With but a thought...his entire Zifu Sea began to change...

Chapter 20 – Manifestation

Within Ji Ning's Zifu Violet Palace. The boundless sea of elemental ki was vast and endless. With but a thought from Ning, the surface of the entire sea of elemental ki began to sink downwards.

Deep within the sea of elemental ki. A large amount of elemental ki essence was quickly, continuously condensing. One enormous star after another was constantly being born.

After an indeterminate period of time.

Rumble...the surface of the sea of elemental ki had already sank downwards considerably. Suddenly, it began to boil, and one enormous star after another slowly rose up from above it, breaking through the surface and floating upwards. Countless giant, tightly packed stars emerged from the surface of the sea, flying higher and higher into the void, each of them gleaming with faint light.

Rising. Rising. Finally, the countless stars came to a halt, high in the vast, infinite 'sky'. In this moment, true darkness came to the Zifu. Those countless, brilliant stars hung there in the night sky, and beneath the night sky was the vast, endless sea.

This was the very first Manifestation after one broke through to the Wanxiang level – a sea of stars in the sky.

Rumble...the sea of elemental ki continued to sink downwards. In the center of the sea, where a countless amount of elemental ki essence had condensed, an even more astonishingly large 'star' was being formed. After another indeterminate period of time, this unfathomably larger 'star' slowly began to rise upwards as well. Eventually, it broke through the waves and slowly floated into the sky.

This rose in a manner which was different from the countless stars which had just soared upwards. In this moment, it was as though the only thing which existed in the night sky was this incomparably

vast 'star'. It emanated a soft, gentle light which illuminated the entire night sky, and which shone down on the entire sea of elemental ki. In this moment, it was the most brilliant part of the entire Zifu region.

This was evidence of a breakthrough to the second Manifestation of the Wanxiang level – the bright moon ascending from the sea!

Finally, this enormous, brilliant moon came to a halt, high in the sky. In this moment, there was a sea of stars in the sky, along with a luminous moon.

Rumble...the sea of elemental ki continued to sink. If the sea of elemental ki had been too small, perhaps even the creation of a sea of thousands of stars would be impossible. If even that was impossible...then that symbolized that there was no hope for a breakthrough to the Wanxiang level. Since the likes of Adept Mu Xiao and Adept Xu Li trained in what could only be considered decent techniques, when they made their breakthroughs, they were only able to reach this second Manifestation.

But Ning's sea of elemental ki was now incomparably vast. Although it had continuously sank downwards for a long period of time, less than 30% of the sea had been drained.

In this moment...an even more incomparably enormous 'star' was forming, deep in the bottom of the sea. Even before being truly born, this 'star' was already beginning to emit an astonishing, blinding brilliance, to the point where even the entire sea of elemental ki was beginning to glow. Finally, it too began to rise, and this titanic 'star' rose upwards.

Finally, it broke through the surface of the water. In that instant, the scorching, blazing light of this star instantly spread out, covering the entirety of the Zifu with its light. The Zifu space instantly transformed from night into day.

This great sun slowly, unhurriedly rose into the heights of the sky.

This was proof that one had broken through to the third Manifestation of the Wanxiang level – the dawn sun rising from the east!

The sea of stars, the bright moon rising from the sea, the dawn sun rising from the east...the appearance of these three Manifestations symbolized that this breakthrough to the Wanxiang level had been a perfect one.

When the sun flew to the highest part of the entire region, it became surrounded by stars. It was located directly opposite to the nearby moon. One Yang, the other Yin. Because it had flown so high, the light of the sun was no longer as scorchingly powerful as it had been before. The bright moon, the blazing sun; one cool, the other blazing. Two different types of light filled the sea below.

“Condense!” Ning willed it. The entire sea of elemental ki, which had only sunk by less than half, began to frantically sink at an even faster rate. As it did, spots of light began to float up from the sea of elemental ki. These countless spots of light broke through the surface and floated upwards...and as the sea of elemental ki continued to sink, more and more spots of light emerged. They were so densely packed and numerous as to be countless; there were hundreds, no, thousands more spots of light than there were stars in the sky. They all flew up into the sky.

These spots of light flew towards the stars, the moon, and the sun, then merged into them. The moon, the sun, and the countless stars began to increase in size. And, as they absorbed those spots of light, the moon, the sun, and the stars also began to evolve.

By the time the sea of elemental ki had sank down to 10% of its original size, everything finally came to a halt. The moon, sun, and stars in the sky had increased by a full size.

“Success.” Ning finally relaxed. The stars in the sky began to slowly move about. At first, they moved about in a very slow, sluggish manner. Soon, however, they began to move in a very natural, easy

way, and they began to revolve around the two larger stellar bodies, the sun and the moon. The movement of the countless stars was natural and innate. These stars and the sun and the moon were naturally linked with the countless true stellar bodies in the outside world, and thus they began to move in this manner.

Within the deep cave.

Northson turned his head to look at Ning. Ning still sat there in the lotus position, but he had stopped absorbing liquefied elemental essence. "Senior apprentice-brother should have made his breakthrough."

Right at this moment, suddenly, a large amount of natural elemental ki from the surrounding area began to wildly surge towards Ning at an incomparably shocking speed. Moments later, this elemental ki ripple came to a halt. Ning opened his eyes. Laughing loudly, he rose to his feet.

"Congratulations, senior apprentice-brother. You have stepped into the Wanxiang level," Northson said in delight.

"I made some tests just now. Indeed, it is as you said, junior apprentice-brother; upon breaking through to the Wanxiang level, the stars within the Zifu in my body truly do resonate with the countless real stars of the outside world. Once I begin to absorb the elemental ki of the outside world, the rate at which that happens has increased by many tens of times." Ning laughed, but at the same time, he sighed in his heart.

If one wanted to create liquefied elemental essence, it would be far more difficult. If one wanted to do that, then one would need to do what Immortal Firedragon had done; set down a grand formation, then spend a long period of time converting the elemental ki of the natural world and distill it into liquefied elemental essence!

Thus, liquefied elemental essence was naturally, incomparably precious. Wanxiang Adepts and Primal Daoists would rather spend a

bit of extra time in training than use it; extremely few were able to wantonly use vast amounts of liquefied elemental essence to rise in power quickly.

"Senior apprentice-brother, you broke through to the Wanxiang level; you should be lacking in suitable Earth-ranked magic treasures."

Northson laughed. "Earlier, we acquired a set of flying swords from that Northriver Zhou. It should suit you very well. This set of flying swords shall be your junior apprentice-brother's gift to you for making your breakthrough, senior apprentice-brother."

Ning was startled. "No, I can't!"

Northriver Zhou's set of flying swords? Indeed, it really was a set of nine Earth-ranked flying swords, and they were quite good as well, most likely high-grade Earth-ranked swords. Although the current core of his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], the 'Nine Yang Sword Formation', was comprised of top-grade Mortal-ranked swords, for a Wanxiang Adept...they were still vastly inferior to a set of nine quality Earth-ranked flying swords. The comparative price of these items testified to this as well.

Top-grade Mortal-ranked flying swords would generally go for a hundred taels of liquefied elemental essence, which was to say, around five kilograms. This set of Earth-ranked flying swords of Northriver Zhou, however, would probably see each sword going for nearly fifty kilograms. Since the nine came in a set, most likely if sold as a set, a price of five hundred kilograms or so could be fetched.

"Senior apprentice-brother. These flying swords are useless to me." Northson shook his head. "This is my congratulatory gift...can it be that you are going to refuse, senior apprentice-brother?"

Ning looked at Northson, then smiled. "Fine, then. I'll accept this set of flying swords." The two were fellow disciples, and they were engaged in a life-and-death adventure together. Ning wasn't going to be wishy-washy about it; only, he firmly engraved this moment into his heart.

Time slowly passed. In the blink of an eye, it had been half a month.

The clouds drifted forward in the sky. A dragon-headed warship was leisurely advancing. Up ahead, a spatial distortion could be seen, as well as cracks and tears in space. Beyond those cracks was a gray, blurry void. Although Ning and Northson had seen these things many times now, they still felt their hearts beat in fear.

The dragon-headed warship naturally stayed far, far away from these things. If they were accidentally trapped within these spatial distortions...Ning understood that given their current level of power, they would definitely die.

"This set of flying swords truly is sharp and dominating. It has an extremely strong murderous intent about it." Ning stood at the helm of the ship. He stretched his right hand out, and around his right hand were nine finger-sized flying swords. These nine flying swords swirled around Ning's right hand, constantly spinning...and occasionally spitting out sword-light. Ning was still familiarizing himself with this set of nine Earth-ranked flying swords.

Because he didn't know the name of these swords, Ning described them as the 'Northriver Sword Formation'. Both because it had belonged to Northriver Zhou, and also to constantly remind himself to be wary of other Immortal cultivators.

"Senior apprentice-brother, look." Northson pointed towards the distance. Ning took a careful look. In the foggy distance, a warship was currently flying towards them. Upon seeing the shape of the warship, Ning immediately said, "This is one of the hundred who took part in the Raindragon Guard trial. This is the ship of the peak Wanxiang Adept named 'Formless'."

"Formless?" Northson turned to look as well. "It's not going to be like when we met Northriver Zhou and the others, is it? There aren't other Wanxiang Adepts hiding on his ship, are there?"

"Let me take a look." Ning willed his divine sense to sweep forward,

thoroughly surrounding the distant warship. Ning thoroughly investigate all the activities going on inside that ship. After doing so, Ning relaxed. "It's not bad. Including Adept Formless, there are only two individuals...eh?" Ning's face suddenly changed.

In that distant warship. The white-robed 'Daoist Eastdawn' and the gray-robed 'Daoist Formless' were also staring towards Ning's distant dragon-headed warship.

"That dragon-headed warship should belong to that disciple of the Black-White College, Mu Northson," the gray-robed Daoist Formless said.

"Judging from how leisurely they are acting, and how slow they are flying...I imagine they must have acquired the corpse of a Wanxiang monster long ago," Daoist Eastdawn said.

"They are members of the Black-White College, after all." Daoist Formless frowned, then shook his head. "It's unfortunate. When we first entered the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains, our luck wasn't bad. We even killed a Wanxiang monster! But afterwards, ever since we acted against that Azure Skysnake, our luck has taken a turn for the worse. We failed numerous times. Three days ago, we were played for idiots by that Azure Skysnake, and the two of us nearly died there."

Adept Eastdawn gritted his teeth. "The first time, we let her escape. The second time, after she discovered us, she actually played us for fools and let us fall into a trap. If we run into her again, I'll definitely kill her."

"Azure Skysnake?" Ning had a sudden thought. In the past, shortly after he had left the protection of his parents, he had gone adventuring in a region within ten thousand kilometers of West Prefecture City. He had battled numerous times with an Azure Skysnake.

After Ning had killed Ironwood Zhan, he had been unable to discover

the corpse of the Azure Skysnake. Back then, he had suspected that it must have suddenly comprehended the 'Void Blink' technique and fled.

"Azure Skysnakes are still quite rare. In addition, due to their innate gifts, they generally grow quite quickly," Ning mused to himself. "I wonder if the Azure Skysnake they met...is the same one I met in the Swallow Mountain region."

"Junior apprentice-brother, let's move towards them," Ning said.

"Move towards them?" Northson looked towards Ning, who nodded. Northson no longer asked anything, instead moving the dragon-headed warship closer.

Ning stared into the distance. He wanted to learn more information about this Azure Skysnake from these two men. Since he had nothing to do during the next two-plus months in the wild marshes, he might as well go investigate and see if this Azure Skysnake was the same one he knew.

Chapter 21 – Meeting Again After Many Years

“Fellow Daoist Mu Northson.” Adept Formless, on the other warship, clasped his hands, then said with a laugh, “Oh, fellow Daoist Ji Ning is here as well. For us to be able to meet here in the wild marshes is truly a karmic sign. After we return to the Raindragon Guard encampment, we must have a good reunion.”

“Naturally! Fellow Daoist Formless, fellow Daoist Eastdawn,” Ning said, clasping his hands, “Judging from how relaxed you see, I imagine that you must have already acquired enough Wanxiang monster corpses.”

“Relaxed?” The two Wanxiang Adepts on the warship opposite from them stared at each other. Daoist Eastdawn couldn’t help but laugh bitterly. “Fellow Daoist Ji Ning, what makes you feel we are relaxed? Just a short while ago, we nearly died. We are just taking a short rest, and then we’ll go hunting for Wanxiang monsters again. After all, the time limit is three months; we have a bit of time.”

“Oh, you haven’t collected enough either?” Ning was ‘surprised’. “Either?” Daoist Eastdawn was truly surprised. “Can it be that the two you have yet to collect enough either?”

Although Northson was puzzled by why Ning had said this, he nodded and said in support, “Right, not yet.” Ning sighed. “Actually, this time, we nearly killed an Azure Skysnake. Only, that Azure Skysnake was too slippery; she managed to escape.”

“Azure Skysnake? You also encountered an Azure Skysnake?” Daoist Eastdawn was shocked. Ning instantly looked towards him, ‘puzzled’.

Daoist Eastdawn said hurriedly, “We met her as well, a total of two times. This Azure Skysnake truly is sly and slippery; to kill her won’t be easy.”

“Where did you meet her?” Ning asked. Daoist Eastdawn didn’t try to hide anything. “The first time was in the north, roughly two hundred

thousand kilometers from here. Three days ago, we met her again, roughly a hundred thousand kilometers northeast of here, at the 'Mount Demonlotus' region.

Ning shook his head and sighed. "We really are linked by karmic. We both encountered the Azure Skysnake. However, I don't know if it was the same one. Well. We two brothers need to continue to search for Wanxiang monsters, so we won't dally. Once we return to the encampment, we can meet again."

"Alright." Daoist Formless and Daoist Eastdawn clasped their hands in salute. Soon, the two warships separated.

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Daoist Formless, aboard his ship, laughed. "That was such a coincidence. They encountered the Azure Skysnake as well."

"I was actually worried that there might be other Wanxiang Adepts hiding within that dragon-headed warship, preparing for an ambush," Daoist Eastdawn said. "But now, it seems, disciples of the Black-White College really are different. They are quite proud, and they won't stoop to doing such things."

"Right. It's the Black-White College, after all," Daoist Formless agreed, nodding. They actually had been vigilant this entire time. However, chatting about the Azure Skysnake didn't impact them at all; naturally, they didn't mind discussing it.

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Aboard the dragon-headed warship. "We're going to the Mount Demonlotus region?" Northson looked towards Ning, puzzled. "Senior apprentice-brother, why are we going to Mount Demonlotus?"

"In my homeland, I once battled numerous times against a Xiantian-level Azure Skysnake monster. After having fought so many times, we actually ended up with something of a friendship." Ning sighed. "Only, afterwards, it most likely left the Swallow Mountain region,

heading to unknown places. Now that I heard of an Azure Skysnake appearing here...I want to go and see if it's the one I knew."

"Oh." Northson now understood. "Azure Skysnakes are Godbeasts, and very rare Godbeasts at that. Given how rare they are, it just might be the same one you met in your homeland."

"It also might not be," Ning said. "But since we have nothing to do, we might as well go there to take a look." Northson nodded. "Alright." He immediately controlled the dragon-headed warship to fly towards the north, then pursed his lips and said, "Come, senior apprentice-brother. Tell me the story about you and that Azure Skysnake."

"Very well, I'll tell you about it." Ning began to slowly narrate that tale from many years ago.

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Mount Demonlotus. This was a mountain that took up tens of kilometers of the surrounding region, and was shaped like a blooming lotus flower. Supposedly, this peak was a very mysterious one...no one who entered was able to leave. The monsters of this region, at least, did not dare to enter Mount Demonlotus at all.

The Mount Demonlotus region took up an enormous amount of space. Because the natural elemental aura of this location was exceptionally dense and nourishing, it attracted quite a few monsters, who took up residence in the various mountain peaks of the region.

This was a place of many monsters, much elemental energy, and many treasures! Naturally, the Azure Skysnake had prepared to make this place her home as well.

In a desolate part of the Mount Demonlotus region, one enormous formation-flag after another began to appear in multiple places, covering a region of over a hundred kilometers.

"Not good!" A small azure snake hung there in midair, staring about.

Its tail flashed, and it transformed into a streak of light, wanting to flee.

"Azure Skysnake! Even now, you want to try and flee?" This voice boomed like thunder. From far away, in front of one of the formation flags, a ten-meter tall, azure-skinned man had appeared. This muscular man's eyes glowed with a dark green light, and he had a heaven-shaking aura around him.

"Azure Skysnake, surrender and allow yourself to be captured."

"Stop struggling."

"If you resist, you will die an even more miserable death."

One voice after another rang out. In each of the formation flag locations, figures began to appear, all of them with monstrous auras that filled the heavens. There was an alluring, white-furred woman, a shockingly savage black monster, a tall, skinny, evil-looking man... more than ten Wanxiang monsters had appeared.

The little azure snake swept the surrounding area with her gaze, and then her body blurred before transforming into a ruby-lipped, ivory-toothed, azure-robed maiden. Worry on her face, she hurriedly said, "You should be King Dragonwhale."

"I am indeed." The ten-meter tall, azure-skinned man's voice rumbled like thunder. This monster, Dragonwhale, was extremely famous in the Mount Demonlotus region. This was a monster who trained as a Fiendgod Body Refiner, and who even had a divine ability. There were dozens of Wanxiang monsters who served him. Not even human Immortal cultivators would be so foolish as to try and act against this Dragonwhale.

"I don't know how a humble monster like myself offended you, your Majesty, for you to come deal with me in such an awe-inspiring manner," the azure-robed maiden said, panicked.

"Just yesterday, you killed my lifelong friend." The Dragonwhale

monster's eyes glowed with a shockingly powerful light. The azure-robed maiden was stunned.

"Right. That Zifu-level panther-headed monster was my lifelong friend." The Dragonwhale monster's eyes were filled with a savage, killing intent. "The two of us knew each other back when we were both ordinary little monsters. It has been countless years...I didn't expect he'd fall to your hands."

"I, I..." the azure-robed maiden said, panicked, "I didn't..."

"Stop dissembling," the Dragonwhale said coldly. "You killed my lifelong friend. I will definitely let you know what it means to be in such agony that you would wish to die. Everyone...capture her alive. I will use ki-sealing chains to bind her, then viciously torture her for ten or a hundred years. Only in this way can I give vent to my hatred."

"Very well."

"Big Brother, don't worry at all."

"Leave it to us."

The ten-plus Wanxiang monsters began to surround her.

"You want to kill me? In your dreams!" That azure-robed maiden, a look of panic still on her face, suddenly roared in rage. With a swoosh, she transformed into a small azure snake once more, then immediately fled at high speed.

"Fleeing?" The Dragonwhale watched emotionlessly. The ten-plus Wanxiang monsters surrounded her, moving towards her in an enveloping manner.

"This Dragonwhale really is insidious. It actually set up a spacialock formation in this region, making me unable to Void Blink." The little azure serpent cursed to itself. "It seems this time, I'm really in danger. The wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains truly are a

dangerous place; my senior fellow disciples spoke the truth."

Although she had apprenticed herself to a monster Immortal, that monster Immortal accepted many monsters; virtually no monsters would be refused. Although she, an Azure Skysnake, was viewed with comparative importance, if she were to be attacked or killed in the outside world while adventuring, no one would help make an appearance on her behalf. Amongst monsters...life was far more savage and ruthless than life was amongst humans.

"This Azure Skysnake really is slippery."

"Although she cannot Void Blink, her speed is still astonishingly fast."

"Dire-ice! She actually was nourishing dire-ice. Everyone, be careful."

The small azure snake, while fleeing, would immediately belch forth a blast of dire-ice when any Wanxiang monsters moved to gang up on her! Dire-ice, for Wanxiang Daoists, was not at all inferior to divine abilities; they were extremely powerful supportive techniques. Against weaker opponents, this dire-ice was capable of freezing them to death.

Even against strong opponents, the incomparable cold of 'dire-ice' would cause them to be affected by the chilling cold. Their speed would be dramatically lessened, and their power would fall as well.

"It won't be able to continue emitting dire-ice for much longer. Soon, there will be none left in her body." The Dragonwhale watched from far away. As the saying goes, spectators view things with the greatest clarity. "All you need to do is continue to shrink the zone in which she can flee towards. That will guarantee that she will die."

"What should I do. What should I do. What should I do!" The Azure Skysnake, suffering the combined attacks of so many, had to rely on the dire-ice to impact them and slow them down, as well as her own innate nimbleness and speed to escape them time and time again. However, clearly, under the combined attacks of more than ten

monsters, the region in which she could flee about was rapidly shrinking. If this continued...she would definitely be captured alive.

"Bang!" The little azure snake's tail flickered as fast as lightning, striking against the sharp claws of an enormous white fox. The two were both knocked backwards by the collision. The little azure snake's tail flickered once again, sending her into a solitary arc and fleeing in another direction.

"Still running?" The giant white fox's slanted eyes were filled with ridicule. "You won't be able to escape."

"Bang!" "Boom!" "Wham!"

The Azure Skysnake was forced to exchange multiple blows with these monsters. As a Godbeast, the Azure Skysnake had incredible tools at her disposal, and in a one-on-one fight, she would be able to withstand them. However, the enemies comprised more than ten Wanxiang monsters, several of which were stronger than her. And there was also that Dragonwhale monster who had yet to join in; he vastly outstripped her in strength.

"It seems as though this time, I really am going to die." The Azure Skysnake had this sudden thought spring to her mind; today, perhaps, she really wouldn't be able to escape. She looked at the distant Dragonwhale, who was still staring at her coldly. She gritted her teeth. "I'd rather die than allow myself to be taken alive. Even if I die, I'll pull a few of them down with me to pad my grave."

"Kill."

The Azure Skysnake went berserk.

.....

In the clouds above the Mount Demonlotus region. A dragon-headed warship was slowly advancing. Ning had already spent roughly half a month in this region, but he had yet to locate the Azure Skysnake.

"Given how large the Mount Demonlotus region is, it is simply too hard to find an Azure Skysnake. In addition, it might have left this region long ago," Northson said. Ning nodded. "Perhaps it really has."

"Eh?" Suddenly, Ning frowned and stared downwards. "A ripple." Northson sensed it as well. When Wanxiang monsters battled against each other, the elemental ki ripples they created were extremely strong. Ning was able to vaguely sense it.

"Let's go take a look," Ning said. "Alright." Northson immediately commanded the warship to quickly draw closer. As they moved closer, the ripples grew more and more intense.

"Right there." Northson pointed downward, through the faint fog. Through it, they could see that a massive battle was going on in the wilderness, with the auras of that battle surging towards the skies.

Ning glanced downwards. "They should be Wanxiang-level monsters. I'll take a look."

With a thought, Ning sent his divine sense to cover the region, sweeping towards the battle going on in that desolate wilderness.

Chapter 22 – Lil Snakey-Snake, Don’t You Recognize Me?

“How is it?” Mu Northson stood next to Ji Ning. Ning’s divine sense enveloped the lower area. He was naturally able to see with perfect clarity the little azure snake struggling for her life. The enraged, desperate, despairing look in the eyes of the little azure serpent... upon seeing it, Ning was instantly certain. “That’s the one!”

There were differences in the appearance of every snake, in terms of scale pattern, coloration, eyes...there were minute differences in many areas. It was much like how, although humans all had two eyes, a nose, and a mouth, because of certain micro-differences, every single person was unique and different from others.

“But those formation flags...” Ning’s divine sense sweep discovered that there were formation flags fixed into the ground in an area of a hundred kilometers. Ning could be considered to be quite skilled in formations now. “These are sealing formations; they should be used to lock space.”

“These Wanxiang monsters really set up a watertight scheme; even if the Azure Skysnake escapes their assaults, the formation flags can also form an enormous sealing formation, preventing it from charging out.”

Thoughts were flashing through Ning’s mind at lightning speed. “Junior apprentice-brother,” Ning sent mentally. “Senior apprentice-brother.” Northson looked at Ning. “That Azure Skysnake below us is the one I am looking for. I’m planning to save it. Want to come with me?” Ning asked.

“Need you ask?” Northson laughed. “Then let’s charge down right now,” Ning said. “Let’s charge into that grand sealing formation. Otherwise, once it activates, because of its spacelock function...we won’t even be able to enter with a Lesser Teleportation Dao-seal.”

Northson nodded as well. Swoosh! The dragon-headed warship

suddenly shrank, and its coloration changed as well, becoming the same color as the skies. And then, it transformed into a blurry streak of light, shooting directly towards the battle in the wilderness.

"Bang!" A golden metal rod slammed directly onto the Azure Skysnake's body. The Azure Skysnake rolled away from it, dodging far away, but at the same time it vomited out a mouthful of jade-green blood.

"This time, I'm really going to die here."

"I really want to go back to Swallow Mountain..." This thought suddenly flashed through the little azure snake's mind. But then, it transformed into a streak of light, pouncing towards the white-furred fox, sending a mighty surge of dire-ice straight towards the white-furred fox.

"F*ck off!"

A sudden, explosive roar rang out. The Dragonwhale monster, who had only been watching this entire time, without intervening, suddenly stared into the distance and let out a mighty roar. And then, with a thought, the formation flags that had been placed in the four directions all instantly lit up. An enormous glowing barrier appeared out of nowhere, completely covering this region for a hundred kilometers.

However, an extremely small, dragon-headed warship had already charged into the sealed-off region.

"Eh?" The little azure snake glanced sideways as well, seeing the the distant warship fly in, and the grand sealing formation suddenly appear. "Who barged in? For the sake of capturing me alive, this Dragonwhale has truly made meticulous preparations. These formation flags have actually sealed this region in. Even if I throw off these monsters, I still won't be able to escape."

"A human Immortal cultivator."

"A human."

The Wanxiang monsters all noticed the warship that had charged in. By now, it had disappeared, with two human youths flying out of it. Although they appeared to be young, these monsters didn't lessen their caution. The younger an Immortal cultivator appeared to be, the more worthy of caution they were.

"Qushan, block them." The Dragonwhale ordered one of the Wanxiang monsters under his command with the most formidable life-preserving techniques to go out.

"Alright." Bowing, an ugly man covered in armor strode forward, his steps causing the earth to shake as it charged towards Ning and Northson.

As Ning flew forward, he mentally summoned 720 flying swords out of nowhere, with the core being the nine Earth-ranked flying swords of the 'Northriver Sword Formation'. At the same time, the sun, moon, and countless stars of the Zifu region within his body began to resonate with the outside world.

Rumble...the surrounding skies suddenly transformed into a sea of glittering stars, with a brilliant sun and a moon within them. This was a Wanxiang Adept's Manifestation!

In front of Ji Ning's chest, a jade-white sword of light had already appeared. When Ning had faced the combined attacks of Northriver Zhou and the others, he had dared to use the ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] to deal with the attacks of two peak Wanxiang Adepts at once. Now that his elemental ki had also reached the early Wanxiang stage, and the core of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] had the 'Nine Yang Sword Formation' had been replaced with the 'Northriver Sword Formation', it could be said that the sword formation Ning was using today could've defeated all six members of Northriver Zhou's party!

"Hurry up and flee, and I'll spare your life." Ning flew forward, as fast

as lightning, while calling out in a loud voice.

"Puny human child, you really know how to waggle your tongue." The hoarse voice of the ugly man rang out as he lifted up two golden metal rods, transforming into a shadow as he charged straight towards Ning.

Ning shook his head. "You sought out your own death! Go!" With but a thought, Ning instantly transformed the jade-white sword of light in front of his chest into an enormous Waterflame Millstone which moved as fast as the wind, spinning towards the ugly man. With the support of his Wanxiang Manifestation...this sword became even more unpredictable.

"Gotta block." The ugly man was badly frightened. This human kid's flying sword was incredibly fast! "Double block!" The ugly man twirled his two metal rods, struggling to block, but in terms of skill alone, how could the monster be a match for Ning, who had already embarked on the path of the Sword Immortal? Even the likes of Northriver Zhou would be capable of completely suppressing this ugly monster, much less the current Ji Ning. This ugly monster was only skilled in preserving his life.

Crunch!

The sword-light flashed past the defense of the two golden metal rods, chopping directly onto the body of the ugly man. With a slashing sound, his body was instantly bisected.

The ugly man's body, upon being chopped in half, instantly dissolved into mist, then reformed into an enormous black-shelled turtle. It hurriedly retreated far away. This sight caused the other Wanxiang monsters to all be shocked. Even the Dragonwhale, who had been standing apart from the battle this entire time, to frown as he looked towards the two human youths.

The Dragonwhale waved his hand and said, "Halt!" The other Wanxiang monsters all immediately halted, moving backwards.

"Big Brother, it seems those two human youths are fairly powerful. That slightly taller one was actually able to chop second brother Qushan in half."

"What do you mean, chopped in half? That's because I was in human form, which was why he was able to easily chop me in half. In my true form...how could he be able to chop through?" The giant, black-shelled turtle flew over, snapping irritably.

"You couldn't even block a single sword. You really are useless," a tall, skinny monster said with a cold snicker.

"Why don't you try!" The black-shelled turtle was furious.

"All of you, shut your mouths." The Dragonwhale swept them with his gaze, and the ten-plus Wanxiang monsters no longer dared to say anything. All of them stared towards the distant Ji Ning and Mu Northson, who were flying towards them.

The Dragonwhale said in a clear voice, "Human, it's best if you don't interfere in the matters of us monsters. You had best leave right away. I will release the grand sealing formation and let you leave. If you don't leave..." The green light in the Dragonwhale monster's eyes appeared quite insidious.

Ning and Northson just glanced at the monsters, then turned their gazes towards the rather bedraggled little azure serpent. The little azure serpent's body was torn open, but it was rapidly healing.

She, too, looked towards these two humans who had temporarily rescued her from disaster. As she did...she was instantly dazed.

That fur-clad youth?

His appearance...it was identical to that arrogant youth of the Ji clan who had challenged her to do battle countless times, back in Eastmount Marsh.

"Little snakey-snake!" Ning stared towards that distant, somewhat

stupefied azure snake. He began to roar with laughter. "Don't you recognize me anymore?"

Little snakey-snake?

The little azure snake was stupefied. That nickname...it was so familiar. Back then, that arrogant youth of the Ji clan had addressed her in this manner.

"It really is you!" The little azure snake instantly shouted back in shock, "You are that arrogant kid of the Ji clan?"

Ning laughed. "Listen up! My name is Ji Ning!"

With a flash, the little azure snake moved next towards Ning. It even transformed into human form, into an azure-robed maiden. Her face was rather ashen, but the azure-robed maiden inspected Ning closely, as though she wanted to carefully inspect even the pores on Ning's face. Completely flabbergasted, she said, "You really are that kid of the Ji clan? You weren't killed by Ironwood Zhan?"

"I killed Ironwood Zhan," Ning said with a pursed smile. "I didn't expect that in human form, you'd assume the form of a woman."

The azure-robed maiden stared back at him. "I was a female to begin with."

It had been many years since they had met. One had only been at the Houtian level, while the other was an ordinary Xiantian monster. Back then, they had battled many times, but now, when they saw each other, they felt so very close, very familiar with each other... perhaps this was the effect of running into a familiar face in an unfamiliar place. This naturally made them feel all the closer to each other.

"You two!" The distant Dragonwhale frowned. He naturally could tell that this human youth seemed to be familiar with the Azure Skysnake. He immediately barked, "Stop acting so friendly with each other. This is my turf, and you are currently within the grand

formation I am controlling."

The azure-robed maiden's earlier joy instantly evaporated. She hurriedly sent mentally to the nearby Ning, "Kid of the Ji clan, it seems as though you are now quite powerful. However, don't think that just because you were able to overcome the human form of that Wanxiang monster, that you are capable of defeating that group of monsters. There are sixteen Wanxiang monsters present, and when they are in their true forms, their power will increase explosively. And that Dragonwhale...by himself, he's more powerful than the rest of them joined together. It not only is a Dragonwhale with tremendous talent and incomparably great strength, it also trains as a Fiendgod Body Refiner, and has a divine ability. Its power is tremendous."

Ning was startled. A Fiendgod Body Refiner, with a divine ability?

"This Dragonwhale monster is the leader of the Mount Demonlotus region," the azure-robed maiden sent. "He has tens of Wanxiang monsters under his control. This time, to attack me, he only brought fifteen of them. He has long ago reached the peak of the Wanxiang level as a Fiendgod Body Refiner. With his divine ability and his innate talent...you cannot take him on as an enemy. Hurry up and flee. Don't worry about me."

The distant Dragonwhale shouted calmly, "I will give you two choices. The first choice is to immediately leave. The two of you will be able to live. The second choice is to die, both of you, right here."

Northson stood there, grinning, seeming quite relaxed.

Ning was similarly relaxed.

"Kid of the Ji clan, don't be stupid. Hurry up and leave. If you are willing to do so, in the future, get revenge for me," the azure-robed maiden sent to him. "For I, Qingqing, to be able to see you before I die is already enough. It can be said that the heavens were not unkind to me."

Ning glanced towards the distant Dragonwhale and the fifteen other monsters next to him. Their auras were surging towards the heavens. Ning said in a clear voice, "Dragonwhale, I'll give you two choices as well. The first choice is, I'll leave with this little snakey-snake, and you can live. The second choice is, I'll kill all of you, and then I'll take this little snakey-snake away."

Chapter 23 -Monsters Executed By The Sword

The azure-robed maiden stared, astonished, towards the nearby Ji Ning. This Ji Ning actually dared say something like this? These words were too...too dominating!

The distant Wanxiang monsters were startled as well. Instantly, a Wanxiang monster howled in rage, "Human punk, kill us all? Just you?"

"You are looking to die!"

"A little human punk like you dares to be so arrogant?"

"Kill him!"

The Wanxiang monsters were all enraged, but they didn't dare to act rashly. The nearby Dragonwhale stretched his hand out, and instantly, the other monsters all fell silent.

The Dragonwhale looked weighingly at this human youth. Ning's calm appearance caused him to be puzzled...what abilities did this human youth have, for him to dare to act so confidently? But just now, the Wanxiang Manifestation had indicated clearly...that this youth was indeed merely a Wanxiang Adept.

Many thoughts flashed through the Dragonwhale monster's mind. In the end, he said in a growling voice, "I'll give you a final chance to live. Leave, immediately!" Given his fame and prestige, how could he possibly be scared off by a few words from Ning?

"Haha..." Ning began to laugh. He looked at the nearby Mu Northson. "Junior apprentice-brother, tell me, are they or aren't they seeking a path to death for themselves?"

"They are, indeed, seeking a path to death for themselves." Northson laughed as well. He knew exactly what this senior apprentice-brother of his was capable of. His [Soulshaker Art] was comparable to a

Primal Daoist's, and even the majority of those six elite Wanxiang Adepts in Northriver Zhou's group had died due to it, despite having protective treasures which their seniors had bestowed upon them. If it hadn't been for those treasures, most likely all of them would have died.

These Wanxiang monsters? At most, Ning would spend a little extra time on them.

"Hurry up and depart. Don't charge straight into the path of death." Ning's 729 flying swords hovered about him, forming that jade-white sword of light in front of him. Ning stretched out a finger, gently tapping the jade-white sword. It actually emitted a clear, ringing sound; this jade-white sword of light had actually condensed so much that it was like a real flying sword.

"If you don't leave, I'm going to start a massacre," Ning said calmly.

The pupils of the distant Dragonwhale monster shrank, but the light from his abyssal, green eyes brightened significantly. His savage aura began to fill the heavens, and he roared out an order: "Use all methods available to you at full strength and kill these two humans."

"We were waiting for these words."

"Big Brother, leave it to us."

"Let's go!"

"Slaughter him."

One Wanxiang monster after another immediately transformed into their true forms. They were avians, they were hooved beasts, they were aquatic beasts...they had jade eyes, they had three eyes...in short, they were all sorts of strange creatures. After transforming into their true forms, all of them emanated a heaven-filling monstrous aura. And then, with savage howls, they charged towards Ning and Northson.

This sight caused tremendous shock to the azure-robed maiden by Ning's side. She looked towards the nearby Ning, then sent hurriedly, "Are you just bluffing them, or are you really that capable? Nine years ago, you weren't even at the Xiantian level. It's only been nine years...these are all Wanxiang monsters. If you aren't able to beat them, hurry up and run."

"Little snakey-snake..." Ning pursed his lips into a grin. "You just watch and see."

Ning gently flicked at the jade-white sword in front of him. Hearing the clear ringing sound, he beamed. "They are nothing more than birds made of mud and toy mutts made from bricks. Junior apprentice-brother, let's do it!"

Swish!

The jade-white sword in front of him immediately transformed into a gleaming Waterflame Millstone. Moving as fast as the wind, it howled forth.

"Excellent." Northson's hands swept out with two rays of black light which transformed into two giant black snakes in the air, which flew over with a howl as well.

A fierce look flashed through Ning's eyes. The Soulshaker Seal in front of his divine soul, seated within his sea of consciousness, suddenly brightened dramatically. A large amount of divine will surged forth from the Soulshaker Seal. Under Ning's control, it crushed outwards towards every direction. Savage, turbid waves of divine will roared forth, and everything within its path was struck by the waves of divine will.

The divine will moved at an incredible speed, faster than even the flying swords and constructs. Even before the sword-light had arrived, Ning's waves of divine will had collided with the souls of those fifteen Wanxiang monsters.

BANG!!! The fifteen Wanxiang monsters were all filled with boundless self-confidence and killing intent, but suddenly, the invisible, formless wave of divine will struck them, causing them to feel as though their souls had been viciously smashed down upon by an iron warhammer.

"How can this..."

"This..."

Even as terror appeared in their minds, they all became dazed.

The sword-light of the ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] was incomparably soft and slick. It howled drearily like the wind as it moved forward, first chopping directly through the body of the golden-furred ape. The golden-furred ape didn't try to resist in the slightest, allowing the sword-light to easily chop through it from head to tail, slicing it in half. And then, still howling forward, it chopped towards the white-furred fox, which was similarly split in half in an instant...

"Kill." On the other side, the two black water-snakes under Northson's control also savagely attacked their targets. The tail of one serpent viciously lashed out, instantly disintegrating the body of one Wanxiang monster. The tail of the other serpent tightened around the bodies of another monster, crushing it to smithereens.

.....

Fast!

It was too fast!

How fast was the sword-light? How fast was the flight of the constructs? The Dragonwhale monster in the distance had been watching calmly as Ning and Northson had unleashed their sword-light and constructs, and he had paid them no heed. He believed that the fifteen Wanxiang monsters under his command would definitely be able to resist, and should even have the advantage. "I

imagine, these two humans will be killed without needing me to intervene."

Just as this thought flashed past his mind, he saw, to his astonishment, that in the face of Ning's sword-light and Northson's constructs, his fifteen Wanxiang monsters didn't fight back at all, allowing the attacks to strike them.

Yes, these were monsters. However, it must be understood that if they weren't using any defenses at all, even Primal Daoists wouldn't dare to use their bodies to block the sword-light of a Sword Immortal, even if the Sword Immortal was only at the Wanxiang Adept stage.

"Swish!" The sword-light danced, and the constructs danced as well. In but the blink of an eye, the sword-light had consecutively executed nine monsters. The other monsters were all finished with a single chop; only the giant, black-shelled turtle had required two chops. The first chop hadn't been able to crack its shell; the second time, Ning's sword-light had shot forward like 'Chef Ding carving the ox'¹; he carved in through the seams and the slits, thus executing the black-shelled turtle.

As for the other six monsters, they were crushed into mincemeat by Northson's constructs. In but the blink of an eye, the fifteen monsters had all been killed!

"No!" The white-furred fox, after being chopped into two pieces, actually reformed, then frantically retreated in terror.

"A Fiendgod Body Refiner?" Ning laughed softly. "You won't be able to escape." The rolling waves of divine will once more struck the white-furred fox, and the fleeing fox was once more stunned. The sword-light once more flashed towards it through the air in an incomparably graceful manner, easily chopping her apart. At the same time, a beautiful Waterflame Lotus bloomed next to her, completely surrounding her within. Soon, it ground the flesh and blood of the white-furred fox into dust. Soon, the divine power within

the flesh and the blood was used up, and the fox became deader-than-dead.

The fifteen Wanxiang monsters were now all dead!

"Killing Wanxiang monsters really is much easier than killing Wanxiang Adepts," Ning murmured to himself. "Not a single one of them had any protective treasures bestowed by seniors."

Complete silence!

The entire wilderness had fallen silent. Ning and Northson smiled in a relaxed fashion, but the nearby azure-robed maiden was completely stupefied. "Fifteen Wanxiang monsters, all of them extremely powerful and at the middle, late, or even peak Wanxiang level. Why is it that when faced with this kid of the Ji clan, none of them resisted at all, resulting in them instantly being killed?"

Because Ning's divine will had bypassed her, she didn't realize that Ning had used it to attack at all.

"It's only been nine years." The azure-robed maiden looked towards Ning, somewhat dazed. "I'm an Azure Skysnake. I've gone to many places and have encountered repeated strokes of good fortune, and have even apprentice myself to a monster Immortal. Only thus did I reach the Wanxiang level. How is it that this kid of the Ji clan...was able to kill Wanxiang monsters as easily as killing a chicken? How could he have become even more powerful than me?"

When the two had battled at Eastmount Marsh countless times, their power had always been roughly equal. The Azure Skysnake had felt quite confident that her power had risen very quickly, but now, it seemed....

.....

The distant Dragonwhale monster was both stunned and incomparably enraged. Immediately afterward, however, he calmed down. He stared at the distant Ning and Northson, then said in a low

voice, "No wonder you are so confident. You actually have a divine will technique. And you have such a powerful divine soul; when using the divine will technique, you were actually able to affect fifteen Wanxiang monsters with it."

Ning laughed. Even before joining the Black-White College, his soul had already reached the 'divine sense' level. Now that more than three years had passed, he had increased his comprehension of the Dao, his sword-heart had been honed, and he had spent every day of the past three years visualizing the [Nuwa Painting], and enjoying the soul-improving benefits it brought...by now, Ning's soul would be considered powerful even amongst Primal Daoists. Affecting fifteen Wanxiang monsters at the same time was nothing.

The pressure these fifteen Wanxiang monsters had given him was even less than the pressure those six Wanxiang Adepts of Northriver Zhou's group had brought! However, this Dragonwhale monster...

Ning felt confident in his ability to handle it, and also completely confident in his ability to flee. However, Ning didn't feel completely confident in being able to actually defeat or kill it. After all, the opponent was extraordinarily talented, and a Fiendgod Body Refiner with a divine ability. To kill it would definitely be incomparably difficult.

"Hurry up and depart. I'll spare your life." Ning stared towards the Dragonwhale monster and spoke in a cold voice.

A cold light flashed through the eyes of the Dragonwhale. After having consecutively killed fifteen monsters in such an awe-inspiring manner, Ning's words did indeed have a rather frightening effect.

"Do you think you can scare me off by killing those monsters?" The Dragonwhale said hoarsely, "I was born in the Darknorth Sea and have wandered many places. I then entered this region, then arrived in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains...I've already dominated this region for ten thousand years, and I've even battled Primal Daoists on several occasions. You, a puny Wanxiang Adept, want to

scare me away? You are dreaming!"

Ning stared into the distance. "Then let's stop wasting words. Accept your death."

"Accept death?" The Dragonwhale monster began to roar with wild laughter. His laughter was like the thunder, echoing out to a distance of a hundred kilometers.

BOOM! Suddenly, he disappeared, his body dissolving into mist, then reforming in midair to become an incomparably massive, bizarre beast. This bizarre beast had the head of a dragon, but the body of a whale. The dragon's whiskers were more than three hundred meters long, and the length of the body of the entire Dragonwhale was more than three thousand meters. And then, the green light emanating from its body suddenly increased dramatically in brightness, and its body actually began to slowly increase to a size of ten thousand meters.

This massive, ten thousand meter long Dragonwhale hovered there in the air, completely covering the skies and casting the land below it into darkness. The vast, endless savage aura from it filled every part of the area, causing one's heart to shudder.

Ning, Northson, and the azure-robed woman all raised their heads, staring towards it.

"Wow, that's big." Northson stared.

"Kid of the Ji clan, are you really...able to handle it?" The azure-robed woman's face turned even whiter than before.

Ning stared into the distance. "Little snakey-snake..."

"You just watch and see!"

This is a Chinese idiom about a chef named Ding who was able to carve up an ox effortlessly. ↵

Chapter 24 -Ji Ning Explodes With His Full Power!

Suddenly, Ji Ning frowned. "Why are the Darknorth swords in my Zifu region trembling?"

He immediately sent in his divine sense to investigate his Zifu region in detail. Many magic treasures were hovering with his Zifu region, and amongst them were three Darknorth swords. The investigation of his divine sense...instantly discovered that streaks of blood red baleful energy and gray, evil energy were coming in from the outside world, constantly flowing towards the Darknorth swords and being absorbed by them.

The Darknorth swords had undergone the Fiendgod Rites of Bloodforging. They were so happy when absorbing the evil, baleful auras that they were beginning to tremble.

"It seems as though this time, I really killed too many Wanxiang monsters. The evil, baleful, energies from them were also very strong. The evil, baleful energies generated when I killed those two Wanxiang Adepts last time were nowhere as strong," Ning mused to himself. Only when one personally killed monsters would the evil, baleful auras from them swirl around one's self, and then be absorbed by the Darknorth swords. If he didn't have the Darknorth swords to absorb them...the evil, baleful auras would continuously swirl around him. As time went on, they would slowly grow faint, but in the end, a few remnants would be left behind.

Although Ning did have the Darknorth swords to absorb the auras, there were still residual baleful auras and evil auras! This was why those who had committed countless killings would still emanate an incomparable, shockingly baleful aura.

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The massive Dragonwhale, ten thousand meters long, covered the skies with its massive bulk. It hung there in the air, staring

downwards, a cold look in its glowing green eyes. Its voice once more rumbled out like thunder. "Human, accept death!"

Ning raised his head, sword-light flashing in his eyes. "Hmph." Ning's voice turned cold as well. Bang! His divine will surged forth from his Soulshaker Seal, exploding forth and flooding upwards in a crushing series of waves, instantly colliding against the massive Dragonwhale's soul.

Although the Dragonwhale had prepared itself, it still felt its soul tremble. Even its massive airborne body suddenly sank downwards for a moment, but soon afterwards, it regained its stability.

"Eh?" Ning was surprised. "He actually shook it off in an instant?"

Bang! Ning willed it again, and his divine will once more surged forth. The Dragonwhale in midair was struck once more by Ning's divine will, but its eyes were only filled with savagery; clearly, it remained perfectly lucid.

"What a powerful divine will technique!" The Dragonwhale stared downwards, its voice rumbling. "Human, your divine will technique is comparable to a Primal Daoists! However, I am a Godbeast with exceptional talents, and have lived for more than ten thousand years. The passage of countless years has tempered my Dao-heart and strengthened my soul. Don't think you can do anything to me just through your divine will technique."

Ning was secretly surprised as well. This Dragonwhale really was quite extraordinary; it was actually able to remain awake after being struck by Ning's divine will attack. Still, Ning had somewhat expected this.

This was because this Dragonwhale had claimed to have fought against Primal Daoists. Someone who could battle against Primal Daoists would generally be able to defend against the divine will attacks of them. For example, Ning's senior apprentice-brother, Bloodshadow; Bloodshadow was a Fiendgod Body Refiner with a

divine ability, and a two-clawed Raindragon Guard!

He trained in the most painful of all techniques, the [Indestructible Bloodshadow Body]; one could imagine how resilient Bloodshadow's Dao-heart was, for him to be capable of training in this technique to such a high level. And precisely because of this, Bloodshadow didn't have to be afraid of the divine will attacks of Primal Daoists.

In addition...previously, when Ning dealt with 'Dong One' of Snowdragon Mountain, Dong One had been able to escape in front of Ning, precisely because he was able to just barely remain conscious.

Primal Daoists were simply a level higher than Wanxiang Adepts in power, after all. Although they were much stronger, if they wanted to dominate just through using their divine will...against truly peerless, elite Wanxiang Adepts, it wouldn't be enough. Wanxiang monsters like this Dragonwhale, in turn, clearly had extremely powerful Dao-hearts.

"Hahaha, don't grow too arrogant, just because you were able to receive my divine will technique," Ning barked. "Now, receive my sword."

The 700+ flying swords in the surrounding area instantly began to radiate light. In front of Ning's chest, a jade-white sword of light instantly appeared. As though chopping through countless barriers and moving with incomparable difficulty, it appeared to 'slowly' flew up...but this was a misperception, as in reality, it was ridiculously fast!

The second stance of the [Three-Foot Sword] – Manifold Thistlethorns!

"Hmph!" The Dragonwhale in midair let out a cold snort. Its two extremely long dragon-whiskers instantly grew even lower, moving to entangle Ning's attacking sword-light.

The jade-white sword was so beautiful as to move one's heart. In midair, it slashed out in what could only be described as a flawless arc, easily avoiding the entangling strikes of those two dragon-whiskers, chopping directly towards the head of the Dragonwhale.

"What a fast sword...what a frightening sword." The Dragonwhale was secretly surprised. His dragon-whiskers were an 'intrinsic magic treasure' that were used to constrict and defend against opponents. They weren't even able to touch the opponent's sword-light?

"Bang!"

The Dragonwhale let out an angry roar. The nostrils of his draconic head suddenly emitted two streams of dire-ice which could be seen with the naked eye. The dire-ice instantly swept towards Ning's ray of sword-light.

The sword-light moved like a ghost. In midair, it once more moved in an enormous, solitary arc, managing to evade the dire-ice and then plunge directly towards the Dragonwhale's giant head.

"Slash!" It was simply too fast. The Dragonwhale wasn't able to dodge in time; the sword-light plunged directly into its head.

This sword attack was filled with early-stage Wanxiang energy, formed by the ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], and executed in accordance with Ning's most powerful sword art...the power of it was unimaginable! Crackle crackle crackle!!! It pierced through one layer of armor after another, but the massive body of the Dragonwhale was simply too dominantly vast. Its entire body was akin to a magic treasure. After chopping through to a depth of thirty meters, the light of the jade-white sword finally vanished.

"The hell?" Ning cursed to himself. "Its carapace is actually this thick?" It must be understood that the body of the Dragonwhale was ten thousand meters long, and the draconic head was many hundreds of meters long as well. Stab in a mere thirty meters? This

was nothing more than stabbing into its skin!

"Puny human, even if I stood here and permitted you to strike at me, you still wouldn't be able to harm me. That sword-light of yours... that's just tickling me." The Dragonwhale instantly began to laugh wildly, and its laughter echoed within a hundred kilometers.

Ning was finally understanding exactly how difficult it was to deal against a peak Wanxiang Godbeast with a divine ability. Its body alone was so powerful...no wonder it was able to survive, even when facing a Primal Daoist.

"Just tickling?" The nearby Northson's face had changed as well. "Senior apprentice-brother's [Soulshaker Art] was useless, and even his sword-formation was only able to tickle it. This Wanxiang monster really is terrifying."

"Kid of the Ji clan. If you aren't able to beat him, we need to immediately flee. If too much time passes, we won't be able to escape," the azure-robed maiden sent frantically.

"Senior apprentice-brother, should we flee?" Northson sent a mental message to Ning as well.

Ning gave the two each a glance, confidence in his eyes. He said in a clear voice, "Dragonwhale, I was just playing around with you just now."

"Playing around?" The Dragonwhale's massive, lake-sized eyes stared downwards. "If you have anything else, show me what you have. Otherwise, you'll never have the chance to do so ever again."

"Such ignorance. You are a frog seated in a well, staring at the skies." Two Darknorth swords appeared in Ning's hands.

"Oh?" The Dragonwhale stared downwards at the longsword-wielding human youth, as though seeing something that was completely inconceivable. "You...can it be that you are actually dreaming of fighting me in close combat? Hahaha, are you sure you

haven't made a mistake? Human kid, if you immediately flee, then due to your divine will technique, I'm not confident in being able to catch you. But if you move close to me and battle me, you really will be throwing your life away."

As a monster with a mighty Fiendgod-like body, the Dragonwhale was naturally the most skilled at close combat.

"Kid of the Ji clan, this is a peak Wanxiang monster with a Fiendgod-like body, and with a divine ability. And it is a Dragonwhale!" The azure-robed maiden was shocked.

At this moment, Ning leapt forward, soaring into the skies and transforming into a streak of light, instantly moving thousands of meters and charging towards the Dragonwhale above him. While charging towards the skies, Ning's eyes were filled with coldness. He wielded two of the Darknorth swords, and while flying in midair, his body became covered with crimson light. His body was quickly increasing in size; he actually transformed into a ten meter tall giant. This was a 'magnified' Ji Ning!

"A Fiendgod body! Heavenly Transformation?" The azure-robed maiden called out in shock, then hurriedly sent a mental message to Northson, whose face was similarly filled with concern. "This kid from the Ji clan is going to fight head on against the Dragonwhale... does he have a chance?"

"I don't know." Northson stared fixedly towards the skies. He sent back, "However, I heard that in the past, before joining the Black-White College, my senior apprentice-brother was able to rely on his close combat skills to become famous. I hear that he is most skilled in close combat and is very formidable...but I've never seen him truly fight in close combat."

"He is most skilled in close combat?" The azure-robed maiden no longer asked any further questions, because the battle occurring in the skies was making her incomparably nervous.

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When Ning soared into the heavens, as he was executing the Heavenly Transformation technique, the two dragon-whiskers of the Dragonwhale in the sky once more swooped towards him, trying to entangle him. In addition, the Dragonwhale once more let out an angered snort. Rumble...two streaks of dire-ice belched forth from its nostrils, spreading out and freezing the air itself as it swept towards Ning.

The sword-light was able to dodge, but although Ning had the Windwing Evasion technique, he couldn't possibly compete with sword-light in terms of speed.

He couldn't dodge? Then...he would chop it apart!

"BREAK!" Ning violently swung the Darknorth swords in his hands, executing the second stance of the [Three-Foot Sword], the 'Manifold Thistlethorns'. Where his swords flashed past, the layers of dire-ice were all chopped apart, and even the dragon-whiskers that sought to entangle him were split apart and sent flying. Ning's speed dropped as a result, but he had already reached the head of the Dragonwhale.

"Die." The Dragonwhale's massive body suddenly twisted, and its massive tail swept towards Ning in a whipping motion, covering the earth and blocking out the skies as it did so.

But Ning leapt directly atop the Dragonwhale's massive tail, utilizing his Windwing Evasion technique to charge directly towards the Dragonwhale's head. The divine ability, 'Heavenly Transformation', was something which allowed Ning's speed to increase dramatically to begin with. Now, with the Windwing Evasion supporting him as well, Ning was astonishingly agile and quick.

Still...this Dragonwhale's massive, monster body was still ten thousand meters long. It was quite accustomed to enemies climbing atop its body in a battle, and it actually didn't care about it, because

it had its methods for dealing with this. In addition, generally speaking, most of its enemies weren't even able to break through its first carapace layer.

In an instant, Ning had moved from the tail of the Dragonwhale to its draconic head. "Kill!" Ning's eyes exploded with an incomparably savage intent for battle. After three years, he was finally going to once more unleash his most powerful divine technique, one of the top ten most terrifying divine techniques which had existed ever since Pangu had established the universe...the [Starseizing Hand]! In this instant, Ning felt his blood was boiling, was bellowing!

It had been so long. Too long! He hadn't met an opponent who could truly make him battle wildly in far too long. Even when he had been very weak, he had still been able to kill Adept Xu Li in a single exchange with the [Starseizing Hand]. He had never before used the [Starseizing Hand] to engage in a truly heart-pumping battle.

"COME, THEN!" Ning's aura was as magnificent as a dragon's.

"Not good." The Dragonwhale suddenly felt as though the aura of this 'ant-like' human on its body had suddenly exploded and become incomparably terrifying. It even felt a sense of tremendous danger, the likes of which it usually only felt when facing Primal Daoists.

"Go." A thick dire-ice aura suddenly emanated from the body of the Dragonwhale, and the vast amounts of dire-ice frantically tried to freeze Ning.

BANG!

Ning's twin swords instantly transformed into two sword-rivers. In an invincible, irresistible manner, it blasted past the blocking dire-ice as though the dire-ice was nothing more than rotting wood, and then, with a crackle, charged directly into the body of the Dragonwhale.

In the face of Ji Ning's sword light, that incomparably tough body of the Dragonwhale, comparable to a magic treasure...finally began to

crack.

Chapter 25 -A Suggestion

"How did he become this powerful? My Fiendgod body isn't able stop his attack at all!?" The Dragonwhale could feel the ant-like man easily burrowing through his head. The Dragonwhale instantly panicked. "Force him out!"

Ning had instantly burrowed more than three hundred meters deep into the draconic head of the Dragonwhale. Right at this moment, a flood of watery green light suddenly surged towards him from every direction.

"Divine power!" Ning instantly understood; this was the divine power of the Dragonwhale. Divine power was stored in every single part of a Fiendgod's body. At this moment, with but a thought, the Dragonwhale had sent the tremendous amount of divine power that resided in its head in a flood towards Ning. It was simply too ferocious! Endless amounts of divine power surged out, causing even Ning to shrink back.

"It actually has this much divine power!?" Suddenly, Ning understood that his chances of actually killing this Dragonwhale probably weren't very high. This was because the amount of divine power contained within this massive body was unfathomably greater than his own. To kill such an enormous creature...one had to have power that was far greater than it, as otherwise, one would only be able to harm it.

"Break!" Ning, after executing the [Starseizing Hand], was incomparably valiant. He burst through the flood-like waters of divine power, charging straight towards the weak spots of the Dragonwhale's head.

Rumble...

Wherever Ning moved, those two streaks of sword-light accompanied him, wildly hacking and chopping away throughout the insides of the

Dragonwhale's head.

The head was the most central, core part of the body. If an ordinary Xiantian Fiendgod's head was severely damaged, it would immediately perish. Upon reaching the Blood-Drop Rebirth level (the Zifu level), although they wouldn't die...they would lose control over their bodies, and would only feel an innate instinct to reform and repair their bodies. After reaching the Wanxiang level, Fiendgods could rely on their control over their bodies to easily change their appearances and shape, but upon the head being damaged, they would still find their control over their bodies being dramatically weakened, albeit they wouldn't lose complete control. They would only be barely capable of a few simple techniques. After reaching the Primal level, however...they could even separate off a part of their flesh to create a clone!

Fiendgods at the Zifu level were capable of Blood-Drop Rebirth. At the Wanxiang level, they were capable of changing their appearances and form. At the Primal level, they were capable of creating clones.

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For powerful Fiendgods, pulling out a hair and forming a clone with it was simplicity itself.¹

To Primal-level Fiendgods, the head was no longer important or special at all. At the Wanxiang level, however...the head was still important. At this level, the divine soul primarily resided within the sea of consciousness; once the head was damaged, the divine soul's control over the body would naturally be greatly lowered.

"Rumble..." As Ning's sword-light pierced through the vital points of the head, the entire Dragonwhale's body began to tremble in mid-air, and then it began to fall towards the ground. While falling, the entire, massive body of the Dragonhead was twisting and twitching.

Northson and the azure-robed maiden watched this below,

incomparably nervous. The azure-robed maiden, seeing this, sent mentally to Northson in disbelieving joy, "Can it be that he's won? Your senior apprentice-brother really is so formidable that he can even defeat the Dragonwhale?"

"Seems so." Northson was watching as well.

"However, this Dragonwhale is a Fiendgod. He won't be destroyed so easily." The azure-robed woman continued to watch, nervous.

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Within the Dragonwhale's head. Ning had slashed through multiple vital points; instantly, the resistance ability of the entire Dragonwhale began to drop dramatically. Ning understood that his opponent's control over its body had already become extremely weak.

"Excellent." Ning's eyes flashed. "Waterflame Lotus." Instantly, one enormous Waterflame Lotus after another began to bloom in the surrounding area, beginning to grind and strike at the Dragonwhale's body. These Waterflame Lotuses were all many tens of meters long, and appeared at the chest of the Dragonwhale, beginning to grind away wildly at parts of its body.

But...

Grind, grind, grind. It wasn't able to grind through! "Eh?!" Ning stared. They weren't able to grind through? "Smaller, smaller, smaller." Ning willed the Waterflame Lotuses to instantly shrink in size, and their power continuously increased as they did so. Six Waterflame Lotuses, each of them thirty meters in diameter, once more began to grind against the Dragonwhale's body.

"What a freak." Ning was truly stunned. "The power of my Waterflame Lotuses is now incomparably greater than in the past, but when their power is dispersed too widely, they aren't able to grind down its body at all. Its flesh and its muscles are simply too

tough!"

At a diameter of thirty meters, Ning was able to keep the Waterflame Lotuses at the peak of their power. Clearly, only when the Waterflame Lotuses were at maximum power would they be able to grind and damage this creature.

However...they were only able to grind a little bit of flesh away. How long would it take to grind away a ten thousand meter body? Most likely, the speed of the grinding wouldn't even be able to match up to the rate at which the divine power of the Dragonwhale would naturally regenerate.

"BOOM!" The head of the Dragonwhale suddenly exploded, and Ning was thrown aside as well.

"What a fellow. He actually discarded his head." As Ning was sent flying back by the explosion, he felt stunned by the Dragonwhale's decisiveness. Although the Dragonwhale's control over its body was very weak, it was still capable of a few simple techniques. A self-detonation of its head was simplicity itself.

The head had completely detonated, and the massive body of the Dragonwhale was sent flying as well. In the process, the head of the Dragonwhale once more grew out.

The Dragonwhale released a furious howl. "RAAAAAAWR!" Accompanying this heaven-shaking roar was its massive, sky-covering tail, which swung directly towards Ning. It was too fast! In addition, this massive, fan-shaped tail, in terms of width, was nearly three thousand meters. Ning was in midair, unable to borrow strength from anything else and not as nimble as he was on the ground. For a moment, he was completely unable to dodge.

If he couldn't dodge...then he wouldn't!

"You shall...BREAK!" Ning's twin Darknorth swords transformed into two rivers of sword-energy. He let out an explosive roar, chopping

directly towards the massive tail sweeping towards him.

The massive tail was like a giant fan, blocking out the entire sky. The two streaks of sword-light, however, were like arrows that were going to pierce through the firmament. The two collided!

BANG!!!

It was as though the heavens had shattered and the earth had collapsed. The air itself seemed to blow apart. Fresh, scarlet blood instantly spewed out, seeming to dye the skies themselves red. Ning was knocked downwards like a meteor, smashing into the wilderness below. The desolate land, with a massive thudding sound, instantly shattered apart, with massive, deep crevices appearing in a turtle-shell pattern. As for Ning himself, he was knocked deep underground.

"Human." The massive tail of the midair Dragonwhale now had an astonishing wound in it. The massive wound, many hundreds of meters deep, had nearly split the tail in half. This wound was currently healing at high speed.

It stared downwards, clearly sensing that the aura of this human, deep underground, was still as powerful and as wild as ever. It didn't seem to have weakened at all. The Dragonwhale now understood... the enemy was also a Fiendgod Body Refiner. A single blow would at most be able to wound the foe, but the foe could also heal perfectly at high speed.

"I didn't expect that you are even more powerful as a Fiendgod Body Refiner than as a Ki Refiner. You truly hide your power well." The Dragonwhale's voice rumbled forth, and then it transformed into a streak of light, flying far away at high speed. As it left, its formation flags also flew into the air, soaring towards it.

Swoosh! Ning leapt out from the underground crevice, landing on the surface of the ground once more. "He's gone?" Ning continued to hold the Darknorth swords in his hands, staring towards the distant,

departing Dragonwhale.

"Senior apprentice-brother, you actually beat the Dragonwhale monster into a retreat?" Northson was quite excited. The nearby azure-robed maiden, in turn, was completely stupefied. She stared at the Dragonwhale, which disappeared into the distance, then towards that young, seemingly fragile youth, who looked just like he had in the past.

"You...you beat the Dragonwhale into retreating? Is it possible that you actually have a younger twin brother?"

Ning laughed, then replied back, "What's going on in that mind of yours?"

"How can you be so powerful? I had countless lucky encounters, you know." The azure-robed maiden stared at Ning blankly. "That was the Dragonwhale...I heard that it was even able to stay alive when facing Primal Daoists. It was extremely powerful."

"It is indeed strong," Ning said. "In particular, its body is so massive that the amount of divine power within it has reached an inconceivable level. To kill it? I don't have that ability at all. Even Primal Daoists...I imagine that only Primal Daoists that were capable of completely dominating it would be able to kill it. Otherwise... ordinary Primal Daoists wouldn't be able to do anything to it."

Much like how Wanxiang Adepts could have differing levels of power, the same was true for Primal Daoists. Primal Daoists of the Black-White College, for example, had all comprehended a complete Dao Path before entering the Primal level! Or, for example, Northmont Blacktiger; who was a candidate to be the next Marquis of Stillwater; he gave Ning a sense of incomparably great danger. These could all be considered exceptional figures amongst Primal Daoists.

"If you aren't able to do anything to it, why did it flee?" The azure-robed maiden asked. "Because he's not able to do anything to me either," Ning laughed. "In addition, after I slashed through the vital

points in his head, his control over his body weakened dramatically... any Fiendgod who tasted that once would never want to taste it a second time."

The divine soul could clearly sense the body, but because of the damage to the head, its control over the body was incomparably weak. This sort of feeling was an absolute nightmare.

"In addition, each time we exchanged blows, it came out the worse. Most likely, it felt nervousness in its heart and was afraid that I had something else up my sleeve," Ning said. "And so...it naturally decided to hurry up and flee."

"Oh." The azure-robed maiden nodded. At the same time, she couldn't help but feel admiration for Ning. Her eyes flashed as she stared towards Ning; he was too powerful. When he had fought against her, he had merely been at the Houtian level. But now, he was actually as powerful as this; even the Dragonwhale who she thought was invincible had been beaten off by him. The other ten-plus Wanxiang monsters had been killed as easily as chickens.

"Actually, if we kept on fighting, I would've left if he didn't," Ning said with a sigh. Although by relying on the [Star-seizing Hand], he could unleash shockingly great power, this divine ability...it used up far too much divine power. Its power vastly surpassed divine abilities like 'Heavenly Transformation', and by multiple levels, at that! This was why Ning could explode with such strength, but the amount of divine power it consumed was also incomparably astonishing. Ning was unable to fight for long periods of time with it.

"Senior apprentice-brother, enough of that," Northson smirked. "I can't stand to hear you keep talking with such modesty. Just now, it was a peak Wanxiang-level Fiendgod cultivator, and a Dragonwhale Godbeast with a divine ability at that."

Ning blinked.

"Hey, kid of the Ji clan!" The azure-robed maiden suddenly called out

to him. "Eh?" Ning turned to look. "Little snakey-snake, what is it?"

"Do you have any spirit-beasts by your side? How about I join you?" The azure-robed maiden came up with this suggestion. "I'm an Azure Skysnake; we grow extremely quickly, and I'm skilled in discovering precious treasure troves...when you want to teleport, you have to use Lesser Teleportation Dao-seals, but for me, it is as simple as breathing. In addition, when I'm at a higher level of comprehension in the future, those large, spacelock formations will be unable to affect me."

Ning blinked.

"Uh, actually, I already have a spirit-beast."

This is a shout-out to the Monkey King, Sun Wukong/Sun Goku, who in Journey to the West was capable of transforming his hairs into countless clones which would attack his foes. ↪

Chapter 26 – Dire-Ice, Earthfire

"You have a spirit-beast? Who? Why haven't I seen it?" The azure-robed maiden looked about, but she began to feel a vague anger in her heart. She was a Wanxiang monster, but because she had been wandering the world by herself for so long, she was truly beginning to grow tired. This was why she had decided to establish a home for herself, here at Mount Demonlotus..

Earlier, she had suffered the pursuit and attack of the forces of the Dragonwhale. Ji Ning's sudden appearance, and also the relationship which existed between them in the past, caused her to desire to journey through the world alongside Ning.

Unexpectedly, this kid of the Ji clan wasn't willing to accept her good will!

"It's my Uncle White," Ning explained. "Uncle White previously followed my father. After my father died, he followed me. The reason why he didn't come was because I am undergoing the Raindragon Guard trials, and I am not permitted to bring spirit-beasts to the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains."

"Oh." The azure-robed maiden nodded, but she didn't say anything else. Ning revealed a smile. "However, although I already have a spirit-beast, since you desire so badly to accompany me, I suppose I can force myself to accept you."

"The hell do you mean, 'force yourself to accept me'!?" The azure-robed maiden stared at him, furious.

"Alright, let's leave this place first." Ning stared at the cracked, shattered wilderness about them. "The ripples from the earlier battle might have attracted the attention of some other monsters." Mu Northson and Qingqing both nodded.

A dragon-headed warship appeared out of nowhere. The three of them all stepped aboard the warship.

At their level of power, they were actually able to fly through the air by themselves. However, that speed of flight was vastly inferior to riding on a magic treasure...and in turn, riding on a magic treasure wasn't as comfortable as riding on a construct-warship.

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Swoosh! The dragon-headed warship soared forward through the clouds, while Ning used a spirit-beast talisman. Maiden Qingqing, in turn, was willing to become his spirit-beast.

Aboard the warship, Ning stared at this azure-robed maiden. "I'll call you Little Qing." "Fine." The azure-robed woman nodded. "From today onwards, my name shall be Ji Qingqing. What do you say?"

Ning was stunned. The nearby Northson jested, "When I lived in the tribes in my youth, when women without clan surnames married a man, they would generally take the names of the men they married."

"Ji Ning, this junior apprentice-brother of yours is actually so very naughty! I'm even older than your grandmother!" Qingqing stared.

Ning laughed as well. "Fine, fine. You shall be Ji Qingqing. From today onwards, you shall follow me...and if the day comes when you no longer wish to follow me, just let me know, and I will restore you to freedom."

Thanks to the influence of his father, Ji Yichuan, Ning treated his spirit-beasts as he might his other brothers or sisters. He couldn't force his spirit-beasts to their deaths, or treat them as his slaves.

"Since you saved my life, in the future, I'll definitely follow you." Qingqing pursed her lips. "In addition, since you have grown in power even more quickly than I have...I want to see what will happen to you in the future."

"Little Qing. What exactly happened to you in the past, after you left Eastmount Marsh? Why did you end up here?" Ning asked. The nearby Northson perked his ears up to listen as well.

Qingqing said, "That year, when I comprehended the Void Blink technique, I escaped Ironwood Zhan. I soon left Swallow Mountain and began to roam the world. By relying on this innate ability, 'Void Blink', I discovered quite a few marvelous fruits and holy elixirs, and quickly grew to the Zifu level. Afterwards, I headed towards the famous Whitedragon Mountain."

"Whitedragon Mountain?" Ning was stunned. "Are you referring to the monster Immortal, Whitedragon?"

Amongst humans of this region, aside from the two most powerful forces of the Raindragon Guard and the Northmont clan of Stillwater, the next most powerful forces were the Black-White College, the Skysplitter Sword Sect, the Hundred Flowers Fairyland, the Eastriver clan, the Dragonhunter clan, the Bluewood clan, the Heavenly Saint Church, and the Blood God Church, these eight supreme powers.

That, however, was just amongst humans.

The monsters had their own great powers, such as monster Immortals. Immortal Whitedragon was one of the extremely famous monster Immortals. This Immortal Whitedragon's true form was that of a female dragon, but she possessed heaven-defying power. She was willing to teach anyone who wished to learn; so long as one went to her, she would almost never refuse them. However, she was still capable of training some truly formidable monster cultivators, and had even produced Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals.

"At Whitedragon Mountain, I was highly valued, and was bestowed with quite a few techniques," Qingqing said. "After spending a few years training at Whitedragon Mountain, I reached the peak Zifu level, and the school instructed me to go out adventuring. They said that Azure Skysnakes would only be able to grow fast when constantly journeying and adventuring. The school instructed me to come to the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains, and I've spent three years here and broken through from the peak Zifu level to the middle Wanxiang level."

Ning immediately asked, "What level is your Manifestation at?"

Qingqing said confidently, "I was highly valued by the school. Naturally, my Manifestation is that of the bright moon shining in the sky." Ning and Northson exchanged a glance, both rather speechless.

Three years...Ning and Northson knew exactly how much elemental ki was needed to advance from the peak Zifu level to the middle Wanxiang level. Ning had spent over a thousand kilograms of liquefied elemental essence to reach the early Wanxiang level.

"How many fortunate events happened to you here at the wild marshes of Gaol Mountains?" Ning asked. "Seven, I suppose." Qingqing spoke casually, but then her eyes lit up. "Oh, right. I've used up everything that can be eaten or drunk. However, there are two places that will be very useful to you two."

"Which two places?" Ning and Northson instantly grew eager. A fortunate event? Aside from him barely surviving the test of the underwater estate, Ning really hadn't had any fortunate events happen to him.

"I discovered a vein of dire-ice, and a vein of earthfire," Qingqing said. "A vein of dire-ice? And earthfire?" Northson and Ning's eyes began to blaze with excitement. In unison, they spoke out, "Where is it?"

Why was dire-ice called dire-ice? Why was earthfire called earthfire? After Pangu established the universe, the natural world had given birth to many times of natural, elemental energy, such as water, fire, lightning, light, etc.

For example, Ning's Fiendgod body was formed from a wisp of the Lunar Truewater and Solar Truefire that had been sent down by the two most exalted of heavenly bodies, the Lunar Star and the Solar Star. That wisp of Lunar Truewater and Solar Truefire...if one was capable of controlling them in battle, then even an Earth Immortal

who was brushed by them would most likely perish.

This was because these types of power came from the energy of the most exalted of stellar bodies. This was why, when one broke through to become a Xiantian lifeform, even Immortals were unable to disrupt it.

Fire, from low to high, could be ranked as human fire, earthfire, skyfire, and truefire. Human fire was the mortal fire which naturally occurred in the world, the most ordinary of fires. As for earthfire...

This was an extremely unique sort of fire which was created by the earth itself. Theoretically speaking, Zifu Disciples should be capable of absorbing a wisp of earthfire into their Zifu and nourishing it, but this was extremely dangerous. Generally speaking, only one at the Wanxiang level would go absorb earthfire and nourish it in their Zifu.

Earthfire was divided into nine grades. One could start with earthfire of the ninth grade, then nourish it until it reached the first grade! The ninth, eighth, and seventh grades were the low-grades; the sixth, fifth, and fourth grades were middle-grades; the third, second, and first grades were high-grades!

Earthfire of the first grade...this represented earthfire taken to its limits. Actually, as long as one reached the third grade...then one would be able to go absorb a wisp of skyfire and allow the earthfire in one's body advance to the 'skyfire' level.

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The same was true for water as was true for fire. Water was also divided into human water, earthwater, skywater, and truewater. Human water, as went without saying, was the most ordinary, commonly seen type of water. Earthwater was what the so-called 'dire-ice' was.

Cultivating earthfire and earthwater was the same process. It

required one to first find a place which naturally had a vein of earthfire or earthwater! After absorbing enough of the earthfire or earthwater into one's body, if the 'planting' processs was a success, there would be seeds of fire or water which could then be nourished into earthfire or earthwater. If one wasn' able to find those veins of earthfire or dire-ice...then there was nothing that could be done. This was a sort of natural, precious treasure; one could hope to encounter it, but not expect to.

"It's right here in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains. The vein of dire-ice is a bit closer, while the vein of earthfire is a bit farther away," Qingqing said.

"Qingqing. You are absolutely amazing." Northson was incomparably excited, and he also felt awe. "We weren't able to find even one of them, but you easily found two."

"Heh heh. Those places that you normally won't visit? I'll often use my Void Blink to enter and carefully investigate them. After having investigated many places, I naturally discovered these two," Qingqing said smugly. "Given how rarely humans go there, after a great deal of time passes, some precious treasures will naturally be born."

Ning hurriedly asked, "What sort of dire-ice is that dire-ice? What sort of earthfire is that earthfire?"

Dire-ice and earthfire were both just terms. There were a hundred types of earthfire, such as moonflame earthfire, azurethunder earthfire, and what not. Even skyfire was divided into many different types, and the awe-inspiring truefire which caused even Immortals to tremble in fear was divided in several types as well.

"While I was at Whitedragon Mountain, I procured a book, 'Records of the World's Treasures'. They had records of various spirit-fruits, spirit-grasses, and other things. There was no record regarding these types of earthfire and dire-ice. When you go, you'll know." Qingqing added hurriedly, "As for the dire-ice...I imagine that it can be used anywhere from three to five more times. As for the earthfire,

that's harder to say; perhaps it can only be used one or two more times."

Absorbing earthfire into the body was a form of harvesting; a single vein of earthfire or dire-ice couldn't be harvested indefinitely. After being harvested enough times, it would be used up.

"I'm more aligned towards water and wood. I choose the dire-ice," Northson said. "I train in the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]," Ning laughed. "My body was born from Lunar Truewater and Solar Truefire. Dire-ice, earthfire...I need to harvest each once."

"Good. Let's hurry out." Qingqing stood by the side of the boat, staring downwards, then pointed towards the north. "Move towards there."

"Alright," Northson replied. The dragon-headed warship immediately began to move towards the direction where Qingqing was pointing.

Ning was quite excited. His divine tattoos were what allowed him to control fire and water. If he were to then nourish earthfire and dire-ice in his body, when he combined them together, at very least, the power of his Waterflame Lotus would increase dramatically. In addition, he had many other ways he could use them. When earthfire and dire-ice were strengthened to a sufficient level, they were definitely not inferior to any divine ability.

.....

Just as Ning's group was headed towards the vein of dire-ice. Within a distant, short, desolate mountain.

"Whew." A golden-robed Dong One slowly opened his eyes. "Finally, I'm safe."

"I joined forces with those other five in Northriver Zhou's group, but in the end, we lost everything. I was fortunate in that six years ago, I acquired a protective magic treasure thanks to that fortunate event, and so was lucky enough to survive and escape. I wonder if the

others are alive or dead." Dong One thought back quietly. When he recollected that fight, he couldn't help but feel a surge of fear, shock, and anger.

He had heard long ago of Ji Ning, and knew that Ning was a monstrous talent, but he didn't expect that even six truly elite Wanxiang Adepts would fail so catastrophically. "That divine will technique...I wonder if it was Ji Ning or Mu Northson who used it." Till this very moment, Dong One still had no idea which of the two had used the divine will technique.

"This mountain is an extremely mysterious place; it can be said to be the most mysterious mountain I have located. I've spent so much time healing here, but no one has discovered me." Dong One secretly rejoiced at this. "And it seems as though there is an underground river below here."

Dong One's body flickered, and he moved through the winding caverns, going deeper and deeper within. He continued to investigate this underground river. Soon, he felt the temperature rise to an increasingly high level, and he slowly saw, off in the distance, a wisp of golden fire within the cracked earth. The fire blazed with scorching heat.

"A vein of earthfire!" Dong One called out in shock.

Chapter 27 – Harvesting Dire-Ice

Dong One had been training for hundreds of years now, and had adventured in many places. He had his own share of fortuitous encounters, and even had the chance to cultivate dire-ice in his body. Previously, when he had battled Ji Ning, he had put that dire-ice on display.

“This is...” Done One looked carefully towards that wisp of golden fire that was swirling in the crack in the ground up ahead. This crack was roughly six meters wide, and if one looked down into it...one would be able to barely make out the frothing lava below.

“This earthfire...has some gold mixed into it? And it is both pure and dazzling...” Dong One nodded slightly as he noted all these things. “Given that it was born atop a river of lava, this earthfire should be the ‘goldflame earthfire’.”

There were more than a hundred types of earthfire. Some were actually insidiously, bone-piercingly cold, while others exploded with uncontrollable wildness. As for goldflame earthfire...it was famous for being ‘scorching’, and was an extremely fine type of earthfire.

“What a pity. I train in freezing-attribute arts.” Dong One shook his head. “In addition, my body is already nourishing dire-ice, and is completely unsuited for nourishing earthfire as well. Once the dire-ice and earthfire clash...most likely, I’ll transform into dust.”

It was extremely rare for one to be able to simultaneously nourish both earthfire and dire-ice. Doing so was extremely difficult, and one had to meet extremely exacting standards in terms of talent and technique. Ning, however, clearly fulfilled these requirements.

“I can’t use it, but others can.” Dong One had a sudden thought, a natural thought; he could trade this goldflame earthfire to another Wanxiang Adept. This sort of naturally occurring earthfire vein was something one could only dream of; naturally, he had to sell it for a

high price.

"I'll leave for now." With a flash, Dong One quietly slipped away.

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The dragon-headed warship was rapidly advancing towards the north through the clouds. Mu Northson was constantly scanning the ground through the sparse clouds. "Qingqing, are we there yet?"

Ning sat there to the side, a small azure snake wrapped around his wrist. The little azure snake suddenly raised its head, staring downwards, then spoke out in the human tongue. "Not yet. I'll tell you when we get there. We'll definitely arrive today, so stop worrying."

"That's dire-ice! How can I not be impatient?" Northson mumbled, "If we're too slow, someone else might end up seizing it."

"If that really happens, you'll just have to consider yourself unlucky." After saying a few things, the little azure snake once more wrapped itself around Ning's arm, leisurely closing its eyes and falling asleep.

Perhaps because she knew Ning from in the past...

Perhaps because they were from the same homeland...

Perhaps because Ning saved her life...

But for some reason, she very much liked to snuggle up to Ning. She felt quite comfortable when doing so.

"Senior apprentice-brother, she's not even looking outside. Is it possible that we might've flown past without her even knowing about it?" Northson said, worried. "Well, we'll just fly back if that's the case," Ning said with a smirk.

"Right. I wonder what sort of dire-ice it is," Northson mumbled. "I've never had a stroke of luck like this before." And in truth, Ning was

very curious as well. What sort of dire-ice was this? Was it suitable for him? His divine body was formed from Lunar Truewater and Solar Truefire; thus, this dire-ice would hopefully, ideally be able to connect with Lunar Truewater. Some types of dire-ice actually weren't able to really merge with Lunar Truewater, such as the 'sinblood dire-ice'. But of course, aside from those extremely rare cases, the vast majority would be suitable for him.

"Eh?" The little azure snake suddenly transformed into a mist, then reformed into human shape. "Almost there." Qingqing stood at the ship's rails, staring downward. "Hey, Woody, hurry up and change directions. Curve towards the east a bit."

"My Daoist title is Twinwood, not Woody." Northson gave her a glare. "Not even my senior apprentice-brother addresses me as 'Woody'."

Qingqing stared back at him. "So what if I call you Woody? Ji Ning is my master, but you aren't...you've gotten such a great benefit from me in the form of dire-ice, and you are going to get upset at me just because I call you 'Woody'?"

Northson said, resigned, "Fine, call away."

Ning had to laugh. This junior apprentice-brother of his really was easy to pick on; even Qingqing was able to effortless pick on him.

"Uh, we're there." Qingqing pointed downwards. "It's that giant lake, down there."

.....

The dragon-headed warship quickly shrank in size, and as it did so, the surface of the warship quickly changed to become one with the color of the sky as well, so as to avoid attracting attention. Soon, the warship arrived in the air above this vast lake. And then, after storing the warship away, Ning, Northson, and Qingqing moved to stand atop the lake's surface.

"Where is it?" Northson looked around. "This lake is thousands of

kilometers wide." "At the bottom," Qingqing quietly sent mentally to them. "I have an innate affinity for water, and I entered this lake and accidentally discovered that a secret, hidden area at the bottom. Don't worry...there are quite a few dangerous zones in the bottom of this lake, so there are few monsters present, and no Wanxiang monsters. Follow me and don't worry."

"Let's go, into the water." Qingqing led the way, immediately entering the water. The elemental ki surrounding their body kept the water away, allowing them to effortlessly dive deeper.

"It really is deep," Northson sent mentally. Ning nodded as well. "It's many kilometers deep." They were now able to see the bottom of the lake. At this depth, despite their visual acuity, even they could just barely make out the sights around here. Although they occasionally encountered some lesser monsters, the powerful aura which Qingqing intentionally spread out instantly terrified them into staying far away.

Qingqing pointed towards a dark abyss below. "Follow that underwater gorge and keep going down!"

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After entering the underwater gorge, the temperature of the water began to fall more and more, and pieces of ice began to appear around them. And then, at the very bottom of this lake gorge, an extremely thick layer of sturdy ice appeared. Ning, Northson, and Qingqing came to a halt, standing atop this layer of sturdy ice.

"Previously, I relied on the 'Void Blink' technique to pass through this wall of ice to go play around," Qingqing sent mentally. "Roughly three thousand meters beneath this layer of ice, there's a hidden dire-ice vein. Without me guiding you, you wouldn't have been able to find this place at all, just barging around randomly."

"Three thousand meters?" With but a thought, Ning sent his divine sense sweeping downwards. Deep within this incomparably

enormous piece of ice, there was indeed a vein of dire-ice; just a single one.

"Let's move."

To be cautious, Ning and Northson both used agility techniques to charge forward by three hundred meters each time. As they charged forcefully in, they effortlessly smashed a tunnel through the ice. Although this ice was as tough as a rock, to a Wanxiang Adept...it was naturally easily parted. The coldness of the ice, in turn, was nothing to them at all.

Moments later...Ning's group arrived at the location of the dire-ice vein. "This is...?" Ning and Northson both stared at the vein of dire-ice. This vein of dire-ice was completely formed from various pieces of dire-ice. It was tens of meters long, and the pieces of dire-ice even had human-shaped elemental spirits playing around in them, causing the dire-ice to be filled with something akin to sentience.

"Snowspirit dire-ice?" Ning revealed a look of delight. "It really is snowspirit dire-ice!" Northson was overjoyed as well. As for the nearby Qingqing, she immediately asked, "Well, how is this dire-ice? I swallowed a piece of it as well and am cultivating it inside my body."

"This is known as snowspirit dire-ice," Ning said. After having spent three years at the Black-White College, he naturally knew far more now than he had in the past. "Even amongst dire-ice, this is a top-grade type; it is innately filled with sentience. You should know that dire-ice can be divided into nine grades, right?"

"Yes, I know, I know." Qingqing nodded. "I know this much. I hear that if one absorbs in a first grade piece of dire-ice, one will possess incomparably astonishing power."

"Right. But some types of dire-ice are almost impossible to nourish to the first grade," Ning said. "Dire-ice is divided into nine grades; the ninth, eighth, and seventh are the 'low-grades', the sixth, fifth, and fourth are the 'middle-grades', while the third, second, and first are

the 'high-grades'. Generally speaking, it's quite impressive for dire-ice to be nurtured to the third grade; dire-ice of the second grade is extremely rare, and the first grade is even less common."

"Snowspirit dire-ice is extremely fine dire-ice, with tremendous potential. It can be nourished to the first grade," Ning said.

"Looks like my luck isn't bad," Qingqing called out in delight. The nearby Northson said, "And it looks as though quite a few people can use this vein of dire-ice. Let's immediately begin the harvesting."

"Qingqing, I'll leave the protecting to you." Ning waved his hand, producing six formation flags. "This is a bewildering formation that is extremely strong. Unless one is skilled in formations, there is no chance of being able to break through. While my junior apprentice-brother and I are implanting the dire-ice into our bodies, help us stand watch. This process is extremely dangerous, and we cannot stop it midway. You must be very vigilant.."

"Alright," Qingqing nodded. "Don't worry, Master." Of course she understood. Dire-ice was, intrinsically, an extremely damaging, harmful thing; otherwise, Immortal cultivators wouldn't value it so much. This sort of natural dire-ice was even more savage. During the implanting process, one had to absorb the dire-ice into the Zifu of one's own body; if one was interrupted midway, the dire-ice might rupture within the Zifu, and could even damage it. It was even possible that this might result in death.

Ning possessed the body of a Fiendgod, so he wouldn't actually die, but he still was worried about his Zifu being damaged.

.....

Deep within the freezing gorge at the bottom of the lake. Ning's group had quickly dug out a room of freezing ice, which became merged with this vein of dire-ice. Outside, the bewildering formation had been set, with Qingqing managing it!

As for Ning and Northson, they sat down in the lotus position atop the ice, facing the vein of dire-ice. "Junior apprentice-brother, you must be careful," Ning warned solemnly. Harvesting dire-ice...at most, Ning might damage his Zifu and would need to spend several years healing. His junior apprentice-brother, however...if things went badly, he might die.

Ning had already come to a decision that if something truly amiss happened during this process...even if he had to injure himself and halt his implanting process to protect his junior apprentice-brother, he would do so.

"Don't worry," Northson laughed. "The Dao of Constructs is a Dao of using countless strange materials to begin with. Harvesting dire-ice...as long as I'm careful about it, it'll be simplicity itself."

Ning laughed. Then, he turned his head to look towards his piece of dire-ice, filled with sentience. He immediately opened his mouth lightly, and began to absorb! A pincer of elemental ki surged out, and a wisp of the dire-ice in front of him began to be absorbed into Ning's body.

"So cold." As soon as the dire-ice entered his body, he instantly felt his entire body grow cold. As a Fiendgod Body Refiner, Ning naturally didn't mind. However, the nearby Northson was suffering quite a bit.

Within Ning's mind began to float the memories of how to use the [Flowing Watersource] technique to harvest dire-ice, earthfire, direwind, direlight, and other materials.

"Condense!"

Within the skies of the Zifu region, there were thousands of stars, a luminous moon, and a blazing sun. They simultaneously shone down rays of light. This was all pure Wanxiang elemental ki, and they quickly formed a small, rather nondescript island atop the boundless sea of elemental energy.

As Ning absorbed that wisp of dire-ice into his body, it departed from the outside world and emerged here, within the Zifu region. And, as it did...Ning felt his entire Zifu turn cold, almost stabbingly so. Not hesitating at all, Ning instantly guided that piece of dire-ice to fly towards that small island.

Whoosh!

Like a tree being driven into the ground, the piece of dire-ice was driven straight through this small island.

Chapter 28 – Primal Monster

As Ji Ning and Mu Northson were absorbing wisps of dire-ice from within the glacial ice, trying to implant it into their Zifu region...

The winds were stirring and the clouds were gathering in the skies above 'Dragonwhale Peak', of the Mount Demonlotus region. A vast amount of elemental ki was gathering here, and in the skies, the vague manifestation of an enormous turtle with a serpent coiled around it could be seen ¹.

"That's..."

"The Turtle-Snake. The Turtle-Snake!"

The many monsters on Dragonwhale Peak all raised their heads, staring in astonishment at what had appeared in the skies. The gathering of the elemental ki, the manifestation of the Turtle-Snake... these monstrous Immortal cultivators naturally all knew what this represented.

"A Primal!"

"A Wanxiang monster, here on Dragonwhale Peak, has broken through to the Primal level."

"It must be the Primal level."

All of them were astonished and excited. When Ki Refiners reached the Primal level, regardless of whether they were Fiendgods, humans, or monsters, the 'Primal Turtle-Snake' would appear. The appearance of the Primal Turtle-Snake would naturally generate a constant flow of 'primal fire'. The Primal Turtle-Snake embodied the most supreme of the mysteries of the universe.

"Who broke through to the Primal level? Our Dragonwhale Peak has quite a few Wanxiang monsters, and several of them are at the peak-stage."

"I hear that last time, when his Majesty led a group of Wanxiang monsters out, he returned by himself. I heard that all the other Wanxiang monsters that went with him died."

"They all died?"

"Right. The Wanxiang monsters of Dragonwhale Peak, including his Majesty, number just two or three in total. This time, it should be his Majesty who is making the breakthrough."

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As the monsters chatted amongst themselves, the most powerful leader of the Mount Demonlotus region, the Dragonwhale monster, walked out of his closed meditation room.

"Hahaha...hahahaha...." The massive, enormous Dragonwhale laughed with jubilation. His laughter crashed out in waves like the thunder, shaking the entire Dragonwhale Peak. Upon hearing this laughter, how could these monsters not understand? Their king had made a breakthrough.

"Congratulations, your Majesty! Felicitations, your Majesty!" The monsters in front of the Dragonwhale all fell to their knees and called out in unison.

"Congratulations, your Majesty! Felicitations, your Majesty!" The distant monsters began to call this out as well, and then even more distant monsters...in short, all of the monsters of the entire Dragonwhale Peak began to cry out, "Congratulations, your Majesty! Felicitations, your Majesty!"

Their voices rumbled through the skies and the clouds.

Primal? Upon reaching the Primal stage, one would be considered a mover and shaker of the entire Stillwater Commandery region. In addition, given the Dragonwhale's innate gifts, even though he had just made a breakthrough, his combat power would still be incomparably astonishing.

"Your Majesty, you have painstakingly trained for so long, but today, you have broken through to become a Primal. You have gained eternal life, and in the future, not even Immortals can compare to you." A sharp-mouthed simian monster was calling out flattery next to him.

Upon becoming a Primal, one's lifespan did indeed become infinite. However, the increasingly powerful Three Calamities, Nine Tribulations' would cause Primal Daoists to eventually die at some point. Thus, only becoming a Celestial Immortal would one truly gain eternal life.

Still, the flattery was quite pleasing to hear.

"His Majesty's innate talents are incredible, and he is a Dragonwhale with a Fiendgod's body...even Immortals will most likely be unable to do anything to his Majesty," another nearby monster, a devilishly alluring one, flattered.

"His Majesty..." One person after another began to flatter him.

The Dragonwhale glanced at the surrounding lesser monsters. He sighed in his heart. In the past, his Dragonwhale Peak had been the leading mountain peak of the Mount Demonlotus region, and he always had ten-plus Wanxiang monsters present. However, after that massacre by that human brat, Ji Ning, only two Wanxiang monsters were left, and they lived in two separate regions of Dragonwhale Peak. These little Zifu monsters in front of him were only able to engage in flattery.

"Immortals?" The Dragonwhale secretly shook his head. He knew exactly how powerful he was. "I've only made a breakthrough as a Ki Refiner; I didn't make a breakthrough as a Fiendgod. After becoming a Primal...although my power has indeed increased significantly, I'm still far from being able to compete with Immortals. Still, in the future, if I encounter that human punk, Ji Ning, I'll definitely execute him." The Dragonwhale monster's dark green eyes flashed with a savage light.

“Big Brother!”

“Congratulations on your breakthrough, Big Brother.”

From far away, two streaks of light flew over. It was the other two Wanxiang monsters who lived on Dragonwhale Peak. The Dragonwhale looked towards them, then said in a clear voice, “It is good that you have come, my brothers. I just made my breakthrough. When I think about how our other brothers and sisters were massacred by that human brat...my heart aches, and I feel endless regret. I was just about to give an order for some of the other monster of the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains who are on good terms with us to help me search for him. We must find those two human brats.”

“Well spoken, Big Brother.”

“Right. We should indeed take revenge.”

Those two monsters both landed. Their bodies were massive and pitch-black, with curved horns on their heads. They were a pair of bison-type monsters, and they were the two who the Dragonwhale trusted in the most. Even when he went out to do battle, he would have these two stay behind to protect his lair.

The Dragonwhale nodded. “I’ll send someone to deliver the letters now to the various monster kings and have them help investigate.”

“Now that you’ve made this breakthrough, the various monster kings will all have to give you face, your Majesty.”

“I trust that we’ll quickly be able to find them.”

The two bison-type monsters spoke in unison. As for the Dragonwhale, he took out a sheet of leather parchment. Atop it, he wrote a description of Ning, Northson, and Qingqing, as well as provided drawings of them that were almost lifelike in their accuracy. In addition, he also described the dragon-headed warship and a few other unique aspects. He also filled this parchment with

his powerful Primal aura.

It was the water-imprinting technique. As a water-type monster, the Dragonwhale naturally found it quite easy to utilize this technique. It used it dozens of times, making tens of copies of the leather parchment. And then, he instructed his many Zifu monsters to go deliver the letters.

Soon, the Zifu monsters all transformed into streaks of light, moving towards the various bases of power amongst the monsters.

“When I think of that human brat, I can’t help but want to eat his flesh and drink his blood.” The Dragonwhale ground his teeth. “I haven’t even avenged the death of my lifelong brother. And now, so many brothers and sisters who have accompanied me for so many years have died as well. The more I think about it...detestable!”

“Big Brother, don’t be angry for now. I trust that in a few days, you will hear some news.”

“Once we find those human brats, we’ll go kill them.”

Both of the bison-type monsters tried to placate him.

“True.” The Dragonwhale nodded. “I’ll endure it for a few more days, and then I’ll go kill them.”

.....

The peacock king was seated on its throne. It glanced at the leather scroll, and as it did so, its face instantly changed. It looked down from the throne. “Your king...he broke through to the Primal level?”

“Our king made the breakthrough just today,” the Zifu-level simian said with a touch of delight. The peacock king nodded. “Understood. I will instruct the monsters under my command to help search for these two humans and that Azure Skysnake. Go and make the report.”

.....

One group of powerful monsters after another received letters from the Dragonwhale. From the letter, they could sense that the Dragonwhale had broken through to the Primal level. Those powerful monsters who had previously been equals with the Dragonwhale now no longer dared to treat him with any courtesy at all. All of them gave the order to begin the search for those two humans and the Azure Skysnake.

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Meanwhile, Ning and Northson had no idea as to what had just happened in the outside world.

Within the room of ice. Ning and Northson were seated in the lotus position in front of the dire-ice. The vein of dire-ice, previously many tens of meters in size, was now less than thirty meters. Clearly, it was now a full size smaller.

"Absorb."

One wisp after another of dire-ice continuously flew towards the mouths of Ning and Northson. Clearly, however, Ning's absorption rate was much faster.

"That's about it." Ning's complete attention was on his Zifu region. He didn't dare to be the slightest bit rash. The dire-ice within the little island atop the sea of elemental ki in the Zifu region was beginning to solidify and take shape.

At this point in time, the dire-ice within the Zifu region was like a poisonous pustule that could explode at any moment, causing the entire Zifu to be damaged! This was an extremely dangerous moment! This was because the dire-ice had yet to completely solidify and take shape. The more Ning absorbed, the greater the danger would be. Only after the implanting process was complete would things be safe.

"I've absorbed enough of the dire-ice. I should be able to begin condensing it into a 'seed', now." Ning spent a few moments in preparation, and then, with a thought, caused the thousands of stars, the Jade Rabbit, and the Golden Crow within the skies of his Zifu region to begin to shoot down rays of light towards that dire-ice island. These rays of light contained incomparably pure elemental ki, and as they appeared in the air above the dire-ice island, they began to gather together there. They formed an incomparably transparent seal over the dire-ice.

BOOM!

It was like an earthen rampart or barrier that had been erected over it, completely sealing it in. The entire dire-ice island appeared almost crystalline in its transparency. Above it, multiple runic symbols began to appear, and the dire-ice began to appear and condense atop each of the runes. It was as though the runes were the countless branches of a large tree.

A short period of time later...

"Crackle!" A sound akin to the wild grass growing out from the earth. An extremely thin layer of dire-ice emerged from the surface of the mountain, trembling and shaking, but continuing to grow. And so, a vein of dire-ice appeared in Ning's Zifu, just like that.

"Success!" Ning instantly opened his eyes, overjoyed. He instantly saw the distant Qingqing, who was standing guard carefully while staring at the nearby Northson, who was still seated, absorbing the dire-ice.

"Master, you succeeded?" Qingqing asked excitedly. Ning nodded. "Right. Has anything happened to my junior apprentice-brother?" Qingqing shook her head. "Nothing. Only, he clearly absorbs dire-ice much more slowly than you do. You succeed in the implanation in just a day. Given his speed, he'll probably need three days to fully complete the process."

Ning nodded. His Zifu was even more stable than his junior apprentice-brother's, and his divine will was powerful as well. He was also able to control dire-ice more easily as well. These were the reasons why Ning had expected his implantation process to be quick.

"Master. I have a present to serve as your congratulatory gift for success in implanting the dire-ice," Qingqing laughed.

"Congratulatory gift? There's no need for such things between the two us," Ning said with an involuntary laugh.

"You'll definitely like it, Master." Qingqing let out a mysterious smile. Then, with the wave of her hand, she produced an enormous wooden chest that was completely gray and emanated a fragrant scent. Ning said, puzzled, "Something within the chest?"

"Look." Qingqing smugly opened the lid to this wooden chest. Within it, there was a chunk of ice that was two feet long and one foot wide, and which glowed with a hint of green light. When this piece of ice was fully revealed, the surrounding temperature began to fall. It must be understood that this was a room of ice to begin with; and yet, this piece of ice was capable of causing the temperature to drop even more?

"This is ancient glacial ice," Qingqing said smugly. "I discovered this, too, in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains. That place even has a freezing pool of liquid. I was enjoying myself immensely, lying down in that freezing pool and absorbing the frigid aura from it to nourish my dire-ice, when some Immortal cultivators suddenly came. Thus, I dug out this piece of ancient glacial ice."

Ning did indeed feel exceptionally delighted and surprised. Qingqing truly was a little treasure trove. That piece of dire-ice in his body was nothing but a mere 'seedling', dire-ice of the ninth grade. It needed constant nourishing. Although elemental ki could be used to nourish it, the speed would be too slow. It would be much faster to use certain types of precious, rare treasures, and ancient glacial ice

was one of them.

"Don't you need it for yourself?" Ning asked. "Use it for yourself. I'm in no rush."

A slightly awkward look appeared on Qingqing's face, "Eh heh heh, I dug out quite a bit. I just gave you a small chunk." "How big is your piece of ancient glacial ice?" Ning asked.

"Ten meters tall." Qingqing lowered her head, then stretched out her dainty little hand. An enormous chunk of ice suddenly appeared out of nowhere; it looked like a miniature iceberg. And then, it vanished away as Qingqing stored it away again.

Ning blinked. It really was ten meters tall. He then turned to look at his congratulatory gift, the six foot tall chunk of ancient glacial ice.

Ning shook his head and laughed. He immediately accepted it, then immediately began to utilize the power of this ancient glacial ice to nourish the dire-ice within his body.

Xuan Wu, the Black Tortoise of the Chinese four legendary beasts, is often represented in this way

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Chapter 29 – The Gathering

Ji Ning sat there, his right hand extended. A hazy elemental ki enveloped the chunk of ancient glacial ice within the heavy wooden chest. The cold energy of the ancient glacial ice was absorbed by Ning steadily, all the way into his Zifu region. Within his Zifu region, the dire-ice, upon coming into contact with the cold energy, instantly began to excitedly, wildly absorb it.

“Master.” Qingqing, who had hesitated for quite some time, suddenly spoke out. “Eh?” Ning turned his head to look at her. “Master, after you use up your piece of ancient glacial ice, I can give you more.” Qingqing looked carefully towards Ji Ning. “I’ll give you another six foot chunk.”

Ning instantly started to laugh. He could tell that this Little Qing was a bit of a miser. As he looked towards Little Qing...another woman’s figure suddenly appeared within his mind.

“Elder sister Autumn Leaf,” Ning murmured to himself. “It’s been more than three years since I left Swallow Mountain. Three years since I’ve seen her. I wonder how elder sister Autumn Leaf is doing.”

That woman who had accompanied him since he was a child, who was like an older sister to him; Ning felt deep emotions for her.

“After I become a Raindragon Guard, I need to begin investigating those three culprits who, many years ago, harmed father, mother, and uncle so catastrophically,” Ning mused to himself. “And...I also need to go back to Swallow Mountain to go visit elder sister Autumn Leaf, Bluestone, and Serpentwing Lake...”

Ning suddenly had a strong desire to return to Serpentwing Lake. It had been so long since he had lain within that small boat atop Serpentwing Lake and just floated on the surface of it.

“Serpentwing Lake!” As Ning thought of this, a faint, fierce light began to flash in his eyes. “Sooner or later, there will come the day

when I will be able to ensure that those I love will always live joyful lives. Tragedies will never befall those by my side. Never!" Ning's heart was filled with an incomparably powerful desire, and his Dao-heart was extremely pure. "As for Snowdragon Mountain? They are nothing more than my first stepping stone on my Immortal path."

In his heart, Ning's target had always been to become a major power who could dominate the Three Realms; a figure who could completely control his own destiny. Snowdragon Mountain? Ning had never treated them as his number one priority.

.....

In the blink of an eye, three days passed within that room of ice. The dire-ice in Ning's body, after having been nourished by the ancient glacial ice, was now significantly larger, and had reached the eighth grade. However, only the early grades would progress this quickly; the farther along it went, the slower it would become. Some types of dire-ice with weaker potential would have no hope at all of reaching the first grade.

"Eh?" Ning stared towards the nearby Northson. Northson was opening his eyes. "Ah, success," Ning said. "Right." Northson's eyes were filled with delight as well.

"Woody," Qingqing said, "I've prepared a gift for you. Consider it a congratulatory gift for implanting that dire-ice." "A gift? For me?" Northson was instantly astonished.

"Yep," Qingqing nodded smugly. Within her dainty hand, a fairly small wooden box appeared. Upon seeing the size of the wooden box, Ning instantly clapped his hand to his forehead.

"Look." Qingqing opened the wooden box up.

"Ancient glacial ice!" Northson instantly called out in surprise. Earlier, he had focused all of his attention on implanting the dire-ice, and hadn't been able to divide his attention at all. Naturally, he had

paid no attention to the conversations going on outside.

Ning glanced out of the corner of his eyes at the chest. That piece of ancient glacial ice within the 'small' chest was merely half a foot long. Qingqing hurriedly looked towards Ning, winking at him.

"How can I accept..." Northson began, but Ning rose and interjected, "Just take it. After you take it, we'll head out immediately and go to the earthfire vein."

Slightly more than half of the nearby dire-ice vein was left. Ning could go find other Wanxiang Adepts and engage in a trade...but the two group battles in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains, one against those six Wanxiang Adepts, the other against those ten-plus Wanxiang monsters, had quickly taught Ning something. Given his current level of power, when adventuring in the outside world, it wouldn't be too hard for him to acquire treasures. He really didn't need to waste his time conniving and scheming on potential trades with one or two Wanxiang Adepts.

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Atop a desolate mountain. A Xiantian monster was standing guard here.

"His Majesty ordered me to go patrol and investigate the various mountains for that human cultivator. The wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains have so many mountains. Who knows which one the human cultivator has gone to? How could I possibly be so lucky as to run into them while patrolling this mountain?" A yellow-haired monster was leaning against a giant rock. As a Xiantian monster, he would've been a minor figure even in the Swallow Mountain region. Here, in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains, he was an even more minor figure.

"Two human youths actually caused King Dragonwhale to suffer such a loss." The yellow-haired monster still clearly remembered the contents of the letter. The water-imprinting technique had been

used to duplicate thousands of copies of the leather parchment scrolls which the Dragonwhale had sent out. All of the Xiantian monsters had seen the contents, and they had all memorized it.

Swish!

A streak of light suddenly flew through the clouds, charging towards a nearby mountain. "Is that...?!" The yellow-haired monster was instantly startled. Upon taking a closer look, it revealed a look of shock and delight. "No mistaking it. That's a dragon-headed warship."

After seeing the dragon-headed warship fly to the mountain, it saw three figures disembarking; Ning, Northson, and Qingqing. And then, the three of them disappeared into thin air.

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"It's that mountain over there. There are no monsters nearby, just a few minor monsters who aren't worthy of concern," Qingqing said. The dragon-headed warship instantly dove downwards.

Ning spread out his divine sense to encompass a range of three hundred kilometers. This was the maximum range Ning could currently search at. Upon doing so...indeed, he saw that for hundreds of kilometers around, only minor monsters were present; there was one that was possibly just barely at the Zifu level, and who was painstakingly training within a private room.

"Let's go." They executed their movement techniques, entering the heart of the mountain.

Qingqing led the way as they moved through the mountain. "If we follow this tunnel, we'll quickly arrive at the river. If we follow the river, we'll soon be able to see the earthfire vein."

Indeed. Moments later, a subterranean river appeared within the gloomy, dark underground. The end of the river had a six meter wide crack, and within the crack, there was a tendril of golden fire.

"The earthfire vein." Ning's eyes lit up. "That should be...goldflame earthfire!" Ning immediately recognized it. "This is an excellent type of earthfire as well." Ning felt great joy in his heart, and he stared downwards. Beneath the deep crack was a roiling river of scorching hot lava. It made sense for the goldflame earthfire to appear here, above a river of lava. But when Ning looked at the lava...for some reason, he suddenly felt his heart clench!

It was a vague sense of danger which something within the deep, dark regions of his soul could sense. It was a warning.

Ning turned his head, no longer looking at the river of lava, and the sense of danger instantly disappeared. "Can it be that there is a region of shattered space below?" Ning mused to himself.

When Ning normally looked at some twisted areas of shattered space, he would also feel his heart clench slightly. In a place like the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains...situations like this were extremely common.

"Don't go into the lava. You in particular, Little Qing. Don't charge into it rashly," Ning instructed. "Don't enter the lava?" Qingqing looked at Ning.

Ning nodded. "There should be a spatial distortion or rift below. Be careful. Right; I'm probably going to take much longer for the harvesting of earthfire, because my body already has dire-ice in it. I need to be even more careful in harvesting earthfire. I imagine that I'll need anywhere from three to six days." Ning then sat down in the lotus position next to the goldflame earthfire.

"Leave it to us," Qingqing said. Northson added, "Don't worry at all; relax. I'll go set up the formation right away." The two of them had already set up an alarm formation outside the mountain, and then within a few kilometers of the goldflame earthfire vein, they set up a second bewildering formation.

Ning was seated in the lotus position. He opened his mouth, and

with 'pincers' of elemental ki, he guided the goldflame earthfire directly into his mouth and into his body.

Earthfire and dire-ice were polar opposites. Because Ning already had dire-ice in his body, he had to be incomparably careful when absorbing earthfire into his body...if any of it leaked out and if the earthfire and dire-ice interacted with each other, there would be an explosion. Even if Ning was able to survive, thanks to his Fiendgod body, his Zifu region would still probably be completely ruined. Even if he was lucky and it wasn't destroyed, it would still be badly damaged to the point where he would be like his father, never able to advance at all as a Ki Refiner.

However, Ning couldn't possibly give up this opportunity because of such a minute risk. The path of Immortals was always one in which one would fight for any chance to become an Immortal.

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In the blink of an eye, three days passed. The Xiantian monster had painstakingly run back to report, and then the Zifu monster had personally gone to Dragonwhale Peak to make the report. "King Dragonwhale, this is the map.. Three days ago, those humans you are chasing after, your Majesty, appeared in this area." A black-furred bear monster was speaking with great respect.

"Over here?" The Dragonwhale sat on his throne, staring at the map in his hands. He quickly understood the location. "Very good. Go back and tell old Wolf that he helped me this time, and I'll remember it." The Dragonwhale's voice boomed out.

"Yes." The black-furred bear monster bowed respectfully, then immediately departed.

The Dragonwhale's shadowy green eyes were filled with a murderous intent, and the aura from his body was more than ten times as violent as it was in the past. After becoming a Primal Diremonster...his power had naturally increased dramatically.

"Big Brother." The two bison-type Diremonsters standing nearby both looked towards their king. "I'm going to kill that human brat. My two brothers, for now, look after Dragonwhale Peak," the Dragonwhale instructed.

"Don't worry, Big Brother. Leave everything here to us," the two bison-type Diremonsters replied. "Then just wait for me to return and drink celebratory wine." The Dragonwhale let out a savage laugh, and then its body disappeared from the cavern estate with a flash. Soon, an azure streak of light appeared in the skies, streaking towards and disappearing into the horizons.

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Atop a green leaf, there were three Wanxiang Adepts who were soaring through the clouds.

"Fellow Daoist Dong One, have we reached that place where you said you found the earthfire vein?" A bald, black-robed woman was speaking in a pressing manner. Her face was covered with red tattoos, and she looked quite devilish.

"The two of you, don't worry. I've sworn an oath to the Dao of the Heavens. What have you to fear?" The golden-robed Dong One smiled as he spoke. "The earthfire vein is in an extremely secretive place...even that cave within the mountain is extremely remote and hard to find. I only encountered it through luck; I trust that within such a short period of time, no one else should have been able to find it."

Dong One was in a splendid mood, because he had traded the location of this earthfire vein for quite a few treasures. But of course, this was just an agreement; both sides had sworn an oath to the Dao of the Heavens. Only when they actually reached the earthfire vein would they give him the items.

"Here we are. It's that short mountain below us." Dong One pointed downwards through the clouds, where a short, squat mountain could

vaguely be seen. "That desolate, short mountain over there. Not even monsters can be bothered with taking over that place. It's quite unremarkable."

The eyes of the two Wanxiang Adepts next to him, one male and one female, were filled with excitement.

"Follow me," Dong One said confidently, and then he controlled the flying treasure to descend rapidly.

Chapter 30 – Hunted

Deep within the subterranean region.

Ji Ning was seated in the lotus position. Wisps of earthfire were unceasingly being absorbed into his Zifu region. The glow of the goldflame earthfire within the crack in the ground was now much weaker than before.

“Eh?” Northson’s face suddenly changed. “What is it?” Qingqing hurriedly looked towards him. “A person has arrived!” Northson’s face was now quite solemn. “It could also be a monster. Either way, some form of lifeform has barged into the mountain.”

Earlier, they had set down an alarm formation within the mountain. Since alarm formations were meant to warn the user, they naturally were hidden extremely well, to the point where they didn’t cause any elemental ki ripples at all. Anyone who barged into the region would unconsciously activate the alarm formation. However, there was no way for Northson to know exactly who had arrived.

“Activate the bewildering formation,” Northson instructed. “Even if it is a Wanxiang Adept or Diremonster who has come...even if they enter the underground river region, from a distance, they will be baffled and affected by the bewildering formation.”

“Alright.” Qingqing hurriedly activated the formation which Ning had given her.

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The Wanxiang Adept of Snowdragon Mountain, Dong One, was currently in an excellent mood, and he led these two other Adepts down towards the underground river in a very practiced manner.

“This really is quite hidden,” the nearby, bald, black-robed woman laughed. The bald, white-robed man by her side nodded. “One can only enter this mountain through movement arts...if one didn’t have

a divine sense, one really wouldn't be able to find this place and enter. Fellow Daoist Dong, how did you enter this place?"

"You are mistaken." Dong One shook his head. "There is an extremely well-hidden entrance to the insides of this mountain from the outside world. I found it by accident, but I've already destroyed that entrance."

"Ah, so that's the situation." The two bald Adepts both nodded. Soon, the three of them reached the river. "Look." Dong One pointed towards the distance. If we follow that river and constantly advance, we will shortly be able to see the earthfire vein."

"After we discover the earthfire vein, we two fellow disciples will carry out our promise." The bald, white-robed man smiled. "Good." Dong One nodded.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The three advanced at high speed along the river. A short while later, Dong One suddenly stretched his hand out and barked, "Halt." The man and woman looked towards him. "What is it?"

"Something's wrong." Dong One frowned as he stared forward. "Logically speaking, by now, we should be able to see the earthfire in the distance. But I can't see it."

"What?!" The two Adepts were both shocked. The female one barked fiercely, "You are playing us!" But her white-robed senior apprentice-brother shook his head. "Don't be hasty. Fellow Daoisti Dong has already sworn an oath to the Dao of the Heavens. He shouldn't have lied to us...and I can vaguely sense elemental ki ripples from up ahead."

"Ripples?" Dong One and the black-robed woman both looked towards him. "Yes." The white-robed man nodded. "Let's continue to move forward. You'll be able to sense it soon as well."

"Redleaf [Hongye] lives up to his reputation," Dong One sighed in

amazement to himself. "The genius disciple of the Bloodlotus Monastery! The power and sensitivity of his soul is far superior to mine." The reason why he had chosen these two was precisely because he knew that Redleaf was extremely powerful; if he hadn't been delayed by other matters, he probably would've become a Raindragon Guard long ago. Redleaf definitely had many magic treasures; knowing this, Dong One chose to trade with him.

They advanced by another half-kilometer. By now, both Dong One and the woman could sense the elemental ki ripples as well. "That's a bewildering formation," the white-robed Redleaf said softly. "In addition, it is an extremely complicated one. It seems, fellow Daoist Dong, that another Immortal cultivator came after you left."

"What!? What were the chances of that!?" Dong One gritted his teeth. But of course, he had no idea that even before he came, the Azure Skysnake had already discovered this place.

"This bewildering formation is an Earth-ranked magic treasure, and the user should be at the Wanxiang level," Redleaf sent mentally to them. "In addition...generally speaking, only Wanxiang Adepts will go harvest this type of earthfire. If my guess is correct, they've already discovered our arrival. However, since they haven't moved to attack, they probably aren't confident in being able to beat us."

"Right." Dong One and the black-robed woman both nodded.

"Let's wait a bit. Let me break this formation," Redleaf said. "The two of you stay outside. You are not to enter."

"Don't worry, senior apprentice-brother," the black-robed woman said hurriedly.

"Don't worry."

Redleaf's eyes were filled with complete confidence. And then, he walked to enter the bewildering formation.

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Within the bewildering formation. "That's Dong One, Redbud [Hongrui], and Redleaf!" Through the bewildering formation, Northson quietly peered towards the three figures who were flying down through the distant river. Upon seeing this, he was shocked.

"Who are they?" Qingqing hurriedly asked. "Dong One is of Snowdragon Mountain. Redbud and Redleaf are two disciples from the Bloodlotus Monastery," Northson said.

As the two were chatting amongst each other, the nearby Ning, who was in the middle of harvesting the earthfire while seated in the lotus position, began to grow anxious. Because of how incomparably strong his soul was, even stronger than those of many Primal Daoists, he didn't have to completely block off his six senses while implanting earthfire.

"Dong One? Redbud? Redleaf?" A thought came to Ning's mind. "These three...when we all reported our names and titles at the Crimson Dragon Mountains, when Redleaf reported his name, all the Wanxiang Adepts were shocked. Clearly, this Adept Redleaf is an extraordinary figure. I have to speed it up."

Previously, Ning had been extremely cautious, making safety his top priority. However, in reality, he was capable of going a good deal faster, while just increasing the level of danger very slightly.

"Absorb!" One wisp of earthfire after another entered Ning's mouth and his Zifu region. Within his Zifu region, the amount of earthfire within the 'earthfire island', which was far away from the 'dire-ice island', was beginning to grow.

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Outside the formation, Redleaf walked forward while calling out in a high voice, "I don't know which fellow Daoist is within this formation, but I would like to ask you to collect it. We can negotiate things peacefully. But if you aren't willing to do so and force me to break this formation, then we'll have to shed all pretense of cordiality."

"Redleaf." An icy voice rang out from within the formation. "Leave obediently. If you really break this formation, then we'll fight to the death!"

"Whose voice is that?" Adept Redleaf frowned. The distant Dong One and Redbud frowned as well, because they were very familiar with the voices of every single member of the hundred who had joined this Raindragon Guard trial, but they couldn't tell whose voice this was.

"Since he can call me out by name, he definitely is one of the hundred," Redleaf mused to himself. "Since he intentionally disguised his voice, and tried to frighten me off by saying we would fight to the death...hmph, if he was actually powerful, why would he have to use these techniques?"

Adept Redleaf calmly stepped directly into the bewildering formation. Upon doing so, the surrounding space instantly grew chaotic. A bewildering fog drifted everywhere, and it became difficult to even tell the directions. Adept Redleaf stood there within the formation, taking a few casual steps forward. After attuning himself to the transformations of the formation, he instantly began to laugh.

"Junior apprentice-sister, fellow Daoist Dong, I'll definitely break this formation within two hours." Adept Redleaf's voice rang out.

One minute after another passed. Murderous auras began to emit from Northson and Qingqing. "Three in total," Northson said with a growl. "Qingqing, you take care of that woman, who seems to be the weakest. Leave the other two to me."

"Can you handle it?" Qingqing looked at him. "Don't worry. I also have some things which Master bestowed upon me which I've never used. When the time comes, I'll definitely annihilate both of them with one blow. Do you think that we disciples of the Black-White College are so easily antagonized?" A cold light was flashing in Northson's eyes.

"Right, right. Even I've heard of the famous reputation of the Black-

White College. Supposedly, every single member is a supreme genius." Qingqing nodded. "Leave that woman to me, then..."

Northson and Qingqing were incomparably cautious, preparing to battle at any moment.

.....

"Absorb!" Ning began to absorb the earthfire at an even more rapid pace.

.....

The massive body of the Dragonwhale King had appeared in the air above this squat mountain. It stared down towards the mountain, its dark green eyes filled with a heaven-shaking killing intent.

"Right here? Human brat, Ji Ning, I hope you are still here!" The Dragonwhale King sent out his will. Boom! A vast, rolling wave of divine sense instantly spread out in every direction. It had trained for more than ten thousand years, after all; its soul was incomparably powerful, and its Dao-heart was also very resilient. Thus, upon becoming a Primal Diremonster...after but a single day, he had acquired divine sense!

Some Primal Daoists would need six months or a year to acquire their divine sense after their breakthrough. If one's foundation was insufficiently stable, then the rate at which one would acquire divine sense would naturally be slower. Someone like Ji Ning, who possessed a divine sense at the Zifu level...could only be described as an utter monster. It was no wonder that so many believed him to be a reincarnated Immortal!

The Dragonwhale's divine sense spread out to a range of a hundred kilometers, completely covering the short mountain below. "Eh? Nobody?" The Dragonwhale King frowned. "Wait; that mountain actually has an alarm formation within it." The divine sense could see everything within its range with perfect clarity. Although not

even Redleaf or Dong One had been able to discover the alarm formation, the Dragonwhale King had effortlessly discovered it.

"There must be someone there." The Dragonwhale King instantly charged tens of kilometers downward, towards the short mountain below. And then, with a single blinking movement, moved deeper inside the mountain.

Within the mountain. The Dragonwhale once more spread its divine sense. "Hahaha..." A look of savage joy instantly appeared on the Dragonwhale's face. This time, he effortless detected that less than a hundred kilometers away, close to an underground river, there were several human cultivators.

"That human brat, Ji Ning, is harvesting earthfire? And there is a human cultivator who is outside a formation, trying to break it?" The Dragonwhale laughed coldly. "These humans are actually fighting amongst themselves...how laughable. Unfortunately...all of them shall die."

"I will set down a massive spacelock sealing formation outside, and then kill them all." The Dragonwhale immediately began to carry out his plan.

.....

None of the humans had detected the arrival of the Dragonwhale. The Dragonwhale had intentionally avoided the alarm formation. The only person who was aware of his arrival...was Ji Ning!

When the Dragonwhale's divine sense had swept out towards him, Ning's own divine sense had naturally detected it. After all, in terms of just divine sense, Ning was even more formidable than the Dragonwhale.

"Divine sense?" Ning was shocked. "A Primal Daoist? Or a Primal Diremonster?" Ning was truly stunned. Ning slowed down his absorption of the earthfire, and with a single thought, instantly

spread his divine sense out towards every direction. He instantly discovered the Dragonwhale King, who had already moved to the skies above the short mountain. The Dragonwhale King was currently planting formation flags everywhere, preparing a spacialock sealing formation.

"Hahaha...human brat?" The Dragonwhale sensed Ning's divine sense. Instantly, he sent through divine sense, "I have to thank you. If it hadn't been for you, how could I have broken through to become a Primal so easily? Hahaha, to thank you, I will annihilate all of those humans who are planning to act against you. But of course, all of you will die as well. Hahaha..."

Swoosh!

The Dragonwhale instantly used his blinking movement technique to go inside the mountain once more. He soon arrived at the underground river, then charged forward.

Right at this moment, Dong One and Redbud were outside the formation, watching as Adept Redleaf was striving to defeat the formation from within it. "The Wanxiang Adept within the formation is dead for sure." Redbud's eyes were filled with eagerness. "Right." Dong One was eager as well.

Dong One had no idea...that within the formation were the two people he feared the most; Ji Ning and Mu Northson. And, at this moment, a Dragonwhale King was charging straight towards him!

Most importantly of all...the surrounding area was completely sealed by a spacialock sealing formation. There was no way to flee at all.

Chapter 31 – Vengeance in the Next Life

Dong One and Redbud were both outside the formation, waiting. "Eh?" The two of them, as though having sensed something, turned to look behind them, only to see in the gloomy darkness a massive, muscular figure surging towards them.

This was a giant figure that was two stories high. Clearly, this wasn't a body which a normal human being could possess, and it wasn't attempting to hide whatsoever the savage, monstrous aura which poured out wantonly from it. Its two sinister green eyes seemed to carry a lofty, arrogant look within them.

"Who are you?" Redbud barked. But Dong One said cautiously, "Monster, hurry up and leave. We don't want to kill any monsters right now."

"You don't want to kill monsters, but I want to kill humans right now." The Dragonwhale King was incomparably relaxed right now; a sort of relaxation that came only when one had an absolute advantage in power.

"Kill humans?" The faces of Dong One and Redbud changed.

"If you want to blame someone, blame that brat, Ji Ning." After finishing his words, a giant black sword, wreathed by a river of golden flames, stabbed directly towards Redbud and Dong One.

"Ji Ning?" The two of them were completely baffled, but in the face of this attack from the giant black sword, they didn't have any time to ponder; they hurriedly prepared to battle the enemy.

"Hmph." The black-robed woman, Redbud, suddenly waved her hand, and two blood-red silk ribbons slashed through the air. While flying, they appeared to be two dragons of blood, and emitting draconic roars, they swept towards that giant black sword.

"Freeze." Dong One pointed towards the distance, and his dire-ice

swept forward, preparing to freeze and lock that giant sword.

“BANG!” Like a hot knife going through butter, the giant black sword easily dispersed both of the blood dragons. The golden flames on the surface of the giant black sword appeared incomparably brilliant...they effortlessly dissipated the dire-ice, and in an instant, appeared in front of the body of the bald, black-robed Rosebud.

“How can this be?!” Redbud hurriedly leapt backwards, transforming into a streak of light and about to retreat as an azure bell suddenly appeared in her hands. However, the golden flames on that giant black sword suddenly expanded, and with a boom, it instantly enveloped Redbud. “No!!!” A miserable, agonized scream. Bathed in golden flames, Redbud howled in agony, and then her body was instantly charred to ash. Even her divine soul was burnt into nothingness.

“What sort of earthfire is this?!” Dong One was so terrified, his face changed.

“Junior apprentice-sister!” Adept Redleaf, within the formation, heard that miserable scream coming from the outside. He grew frantic. “Dong One, what happened to my junior apprentice-sister?”

“Haha, earthfire?” The Dragonwhale King let out a cold laugh. “This is Primal Fire!” Dong One’s face completely changed, and the face of Adept Redleaf, within the formation, changed as well. Primal Fire?

Just from looking at the surface of the flames, it was hard to tell; after all, there were more than a hundred types of earthfire, including gold, white, green, and all sorts of other flames. It was quite hard to differentiate them. Primal Fire, however...was the flame which the Primal Turtle-Snake naturally generated. Its power was tremendous; most likely, earthfire would have to be cultivated to the third grade before being able to compete against it.

“She’s dead. Now, you can die as well.” With but a thought, the Dragonwhale King sent his flying sword chopping towards Dong

One. This was a Heaven-ranked flying sword, which it had acquired by luck. Given its power, acquiring an ordinary Heaven-ranked flying sword wasn't too difficult. Although it wasn't very skilled at using flying swords, since it had become a Primal Daoist, it was able to fill this flying sword with his Primal-level elemental ki, and also fill it with his Primal Fire. Thus, the power of this attack was absolutely comparable to the power of his Fiendgod divine ability attacks.

"Last time, I ran into a disciple of the Black-White College who could use a divine will attack. This time, I ran into a Primal Diremonster. Why am I so unlucky?!" Dong One's face was ashen. Gritting his teeth, he instantly transformed into a streak of bloody light. Swoosh! He quickly moved far away with an evasion technique, moving so fast that even the Dragonwhale was slightly surprised.

"Unfortunately, I prepared a spacelock sealing formation long ago." The Dragonwhale King shook its head and laughed coldly. With but a single step, it moved tens of kilometers.

.....

As the Dragonwhale King went chasing after Dong One, Adept Redleaf, within the formation, had an ugly look on his face. "Junior apprentice-sister died? A Primal Diremonster appeared?"

Within the fog, Adept Redleaf gritted his teeth, then produced a long, black weaver's shuttle in his hands. This black shuttle emanated an evil, ancient aura; this was a treasure for escape which Adept Redleaf had discovered when adventuring, which had been passed down from the Fiendgod Era. Its name was the 'Lightspeed Shuttle of the Nine Heavens and Ten Hells'. Upon using it, one's speed would become incredibly fast, and the tips of the shuttle itself were extremely, shockingly strong as well, capable of effortless piercing through even a towering mountain.

However, after using it a single time, the shuttle's power would be exhausted, and he would have to wait ten more years before the power would regenerate.

"No other choices." Adept Redleaf immediately willed it to activate. Swoosh! The evil black shuttle suddenly increased massively in size, while the Adept himself hid himself within it. Swish! The long black shuttle instantly transformed into a streak of light, moving with such astonishing speed that the tiny bewildering formation wasn't able to impede it in the slightest. It easily passed through the formation... and then, moving like a streak of black lightning, it effortless pierced through the rocky mountain, then stabbed against the edges of the sealing formation.

Crunch! It pierced directly through...and then, moving at high speed, disappeared into the distant wilderness.

.....

Dong One, who had been hoping to flee, stared at the grand sealing formation. Instantly, he despaired; he had already tried to attack it twice, but hadn't been able to do anything to it at all.

"You won't be able to escape." The Dragonwhale King suddenly appeared. Its two dragon-whiskers suddenly appeared, wreathed in blazing embers of Primal Fire as they swept towards Dong One.

A look of utter despair was on Dong One's face. Although he had protective treasures, they would only be able to endure for a brief moment. If he wasn't able to escape this formation, the end result was still a single word; death!

"If you have to blame someone, blame that brat, Ji Ning," the Dragonwhale King said with a cold laugh. "You are just the starting courses...eh? One of you actually fled? What sort of a treasure was that long shuttle? It was so fast."

Despite his extensive experience, even he had never heard of this ancient treasure which had been passed down since the Fiengod Era, the 'Lightspeed Shuttle of the Nine Heavens and Ten Hells'.

"Why should I blame Ji Ning?" Dong One roared in fury, "If I have to

die, let me die knowing why."

The Dragonwhale King stared in astonishment at the human cultivator before him. "Can it be that you don't know that the person within the formation is that brat, Ji Ning?"

"Ji Ning is inside the formation?" Dong One stared. But...but but...

If he had known that it was Ji Ning inside the formation, he would have immediately fled without saying a second word. Last time, the six of them, despite joining forces, had all fallen to Ji Ning and his fellow disciple. Why would he try to act against Ji Ning yet again? But Ji Ning hadn't said a single word...

"You damnable, detestable Ji Ning! In this life, you doomed me, but in the next life, I'll take my revenge!" A wild, berserk look appeared on Dong One's face. BOOM! As the dragon-whiskers swept forward, his entire body instantly blew apart.

He knew that the opponent was a Primal Daoist, and had no intentions of allowing the Primal Fire to burn him to death, because if it did, even his divine soul would be burnt to ashes. That meant his soul would be destroyed! If he committed suicide, at least he would be able to rejoin the cycle of reincarnation!

"A straightforward death." The Dragonwhale King actually didn't care at all. With a wave of its hand, it collected the treasures which Dong One had left behind, but it couldn't be bothered to actually flip through them. With a leap, it once more charged towards Ning.

Ning was seated there in the lotus position, one wisp of earthfire after another being absorbed into his Zifu. His absorption speed was so fast that the nearby Qingqing and Northson both felt their hearts race.

"How is my senior apprentice-brother doing? Is he alright?" Northson was worried. Qingqing looked towards Ning as well. "Master wishes to finish implanting the earthfire as quickly as possible." And indeed,

Ning was going all out.

Previously, during the last three days, he had already absorbed quite a bit of the earthfire. Just now, when Adept Redleaf and the others had come to break the formation, Ning had immediately begun to accelerate the absorption process.

"I finally have enough earthfire." Ning could no longer be bothered with anything else. "Condense!" The thousands of stars, the Jade Rabbit, and the Golden Crow within his Zifu region all emanated countless rays of light which descended upon the earthfire island, as though creating a giant barrier which completely covered all of it. The earthfire quickly began to swirl and merge into the runes atop it, causing them to transform into gold. Crackle! Atop the earthfire island, a tiny little golden flame was suddenly born.

"Success." Ning let out a sigh of relief. Opening his eyes, he glanced at his junior apprentice-brother and Little Qing. Ning's forehead and back were all covered with cold sweat. Towards the very end, he really was going all out in absorbing earthfire. That sort of absorption speed was truly deadly; it was as though he had been dancing atop a steel wire. The slightest mistake, and he'd fall off. However, with a Primal Diremonster outside, Ning had no other choices.

"Senior apprentice-brother, what's going on outside?" Northson hurriedly asked, "I saw that Adept Redleaf, who had been in our bewildering formation, has already escaped, and there was a battle outside."

"It's the Dragonwhale," Ning said grimly. "Dragonwhale?" Qingqing said, shocked, "The Dragonwhale Diremonster we ran into last time? But just now, I heard the words 'Primal Fire' coming from outside; can it be that the Dragonwhale has already broken through to become a Primal Direfiend?" Ning nodded.

Qingqing and Northson's hearts instantly turned cold.

Unlike Adept Redleaf, Ning and Northson had just left their schools; they had spent very little time adventuring outside, and the treasures they had on them were limited to what their schools had given them. They didn't have any strange treasures, like the 'Lightspeed Shuttle of the Nine Heavens and Ten Hells'.

"The grand sealing formation is still just an Earth-ranked magic treasure," Ning sent mentally. "Although it is now a Primal Diremonster and has activated it with Primal-level elemental ki... there is a limit to the power of the seals. If I strike it at full power, I might be able to break through."

"Senior apprentice-brother, I have a guardian construct which Master gave me; it can burst forth with the power of a Primal Daoist for a short period of time. It should be able to break through the formation. However, this guardian construct can only battle for ten breaths, after which it will instantly disintegrate, because the materials it was made out of were ordinary," Northson said.

Ning felt relieved. It made sense; his own master, Immortal Diancai, had also given him two protective items. Daoist Jadefine doted even more dearly on her apprentice, Northson. In addition, she specialized in the Dao of Constructs...some truly monstrous constructs were capable of battling opponents at a higher level. It was only natural for his junior apprentice-brother to have some protective treasures as well.

"Hahaha..." A deep voice laughed out. "Ji Ning, brat, you were so smug and brash last time; did you think that a day like this would come? Ten thousand years of training...it all came to a head, and I broke through to the Primal level. Now, killing you will be much easier."

"Kill me? When we battled, you survived because of how fast you fled," Ning said coldly. "Although you have become a Primal, you've only recently broken through; I imagine your power isn't too ridiculously great yet. I still am capable of killing you! We disciples of the Black-White College specialize in battling those at a higher level

than us."

"The Black-White College?" The Dragonwhale King was slightly startled, but then it sneered. It had a Fiendgod's body, a divine ability, and was a Primal Diremonster that had exceptionally superlative talents. Why would it worry about a Wanxiang Adept?

"If you leave now, you can keep your life. Otherwise..." Ning stared towards the outside; the Dragonwhale King was standing right outside the formation. To the two of them, both of whom possessed the divine sense, bewildering formations were completely useless.

Chapter 32 – Awoken

“Little Qing, pack up the bewildering formation,” Ji Ning instructed. This bewildering formation was of no use at all against the Dragonwhale King; it would only baffle themselves.

The formation vanished. The massive, bulky body of the Dragonwhale King could now be seen, standing off in the distance. The aura of the Dragonwhale King was now clearly far more savage and explosive than it had been in the past. In his subconscious... Ning felt a sense of danger. This was a warning from his divine soul.

“I have to thank you for helping me break through to become a Primal. Thus, I helped you kill those two humans. They should be your enemies, yes?” The Dragonwhale looked at Ning disdainfully, then said, “My brothers and sisters all died in the hands of you three. And you, Ji Ning...you deserve death more than anyone else.”

“Go.” The Dragonwhale’s eyes flashed with cold light. Swoosh! A giant black sword, thirty meters long, almost the size of a warship, chopped directly towards Ji Ning, the surface of the sword covered with the swirling flames of Primal Fire.

“Hmph.” Seeing this, Ning let out a cold snort, while at the same time, his own divine sense sent out the [Soulshaker Art]. The rolling waves of divine will swept forward like a flood, viciously striking against the Dragonwhale’s Primal soul! Rumble...the Dragonwhale felt its Primal soul shudder, and the power of its magic treasures was noticeably lowered.

This caused the Dragonwhale to be secretly shocked; how did this Ji Ning have such a powerful soul? Could he be a reincarnated Immortal? But even if he was, he still had to die!

“Haaaargh!” The giant black sword, carrying Primal Fire, howled as it flew towards Ning. Ning let out an angry roar, and his body instantly expanded as he transformed into a ten meter high giant. The

Darknorth swords in his hands transformed into a blur as they moved to engage.

BOOM! Sword-light and the giant black sword collided in midair. Ji Ning, after using the [Starseizing Hand], had released incredibly great power with this sword attack, and was able to forcibly knock the giant black sword backwards, while he himself took two steps back. At the same time, the Waterflame Lotus appeared around his body. The petals of this breathtakingly beautiful lotus now contained both snowy dire-ice and golden earthfire...causing its power to increase dramatically.

"Dragonwhale, you want to rely on magic treasures alone to kill me? You are looking down on me a bit too much," Ning laughed loudly.

The Dragonwhale noticed this as well. This Ji Ning's power was far beyond that of those other two Wanxiang Adepts, especially in close quarters combat; he was exceedingly strong.

"As you wish, then." The Dragonwhale King let out a massive howl, and instantly, its entire body transformed into a heaven-filling fog, but then, next to that underground river, its body began to transform into its true form.

Ning hurriedly sent to the nearby Northson and Qingqing, "Junior apprentice-brother, Little Qing, once this Dragonwhale takes its true form, it'll cause the heavens to collapse and the earth to shatter; the surrounding parts of the mountain will definitely be shattered. I'll battle against him and hold him off; you two, hurry up and go break out of this sealing formation. Junior apprentice-brother, use whatever means you must in order to break through the formation and uproot the formation flags. Once the formation is gone, I'll have plenty of ways to escape."

Northson hesitated momentarily, then nodded. "Fine. Senior apprentice-brother, be careful."

"Don't worry." Ning lowered his head, glancing sideways his junior

apprentice-brother and Qingqing. After having transformed into a giant due to the 'Heavenly Transformation' divine ability, it really did feel a bit odd interacting with them.

"Rumble..."

The true form of the Dragonwhale was beginning to take shape in this subterranean cavern. Its body was simply too vast, while the caverns were too small. After having used its divine ability, it was ten thousand meters in length, while its body was many hundreds of meters wide. For such an enormous body to be squeezed into a mountain cavern meant that the surrounding mountain itself would begin to split apart.

"Break apart!" The Dragonwhale felt too confined and cramped as well. When it was young, it had lived in the Darknorth Seas. After coming to this vast region, it normally battled in the wide, spacious skies. Naturally, it preferred wide spaces, and wasn't very comfortable when underground.

Its enormous, ponderous body began to shake violently and wriggle about, its tail slapping about as well. Slash! It was like an earthworm flipping over, and in the process, the mountain peak above that had taken up ten kilometers suddenly fell over and collapsed. Many stones were knocked flying into the skies as well. Even the earth itself was ripped apart, while the underground river ceased to flow. The underground passage, previously thirty meters wide, was instantly, forcibly expanded to three thousand meters wide.

"Rumble..." Even the boiling lava beneath them began to soar towards the skies, belching forth in a paroxysm of fire as the river of lava itself reversed course. The Dragonwhale's revealing of his true form had truly caused the heavens to split and the earth to shatter. As for Ning, he held his twin swords in his hands, watching this as the Waterflame Lotus bloomed about him.

"Hurry up and leave," Ning immediately transmitted and shouted to them, "If we get separated, we'll reunite at the dire-ice location."

"Senior apprentice-brother, be careful."

"Master, be careful."

Qingqing instantly transformed into a small snake, wrapping herself around Northson's arm. As for Northson, he transformed into a streak of light, breaking through the crumbling rocks and charging outside, moving as fast as lightning.

"Hahaha, fleeing? Do you really think you'll escape?" The Dragonwhale's massive draconic head released a wild, savage laugh. The sky was now visible from their location, and the lava around them bubbled and hissed. It was a picture of utter chaos.

"Die." The two dragon-whiskers of the Dragonwhale descended in a sweeping movement towards Ning, surrounded by Primal Fire and moving as fast as lightning.

"Break!" Ning's sword-light was especially dazzling. "BANG!" Ning's twin swords clashed against them, and with the collision, Ning was knocked flying backwards.

"Its power increased by quite a bit." Ning was sent smashing through tens of meters of the mountain rocks, and his face changed. "Ah, right. Those dragon-whiskers are its 'intrinsic magic treasures' which it spent many years cultivating. Now that it has become a Primal, in its true form...the power of its intrinsic magic treasures have naturally improved dramatically."

After having reverted to its true form, the Dragonwhale's power had increased significantly. Even despite using the [Starseizing Hand], Ning still felt as though he couldn't be able to withstand it.

"It seems as though my power, now, is still quite a bit weaker than a Primal Daoists." Ning faced the Dragonwhale King, not knowing how to battle him and trying to think of a way to delay. But suddenly...

The world went silent.

The river of lava, previously flowing in the opposite direction, came to a halt.

The spraying water of the underground river froze in midair.

The stones that had been blasted into the skies froze there.

Ning was still in the pose of executing the Windwing Evasion and retreating frantically...

Northson was standing in front of the grand sealing barrier, unmoving...

Even the incomparably massive Dragonwhale Diremonster that was floating in the air had come to a halt. Its dragon-whiskers that had been dancing in the air were now frozen there.

In this instant, it was as though everything in this region had gone still. But Ning, Northson, the Azure Skysnake, and the Dragonwhale King, these four living creatures, knew very well that this wasn't the case!

"This is..." Ning could feel an incomparably powerful force instantly descend, so powerful as to completely suppress him. He felt like an ant atop of an iceberg, completely unable to move. He even felt as though he couldn't change his facial expressions. That surge of power was simply too massive.

"What...what is going on?" Ning was completely stunned and uneasy. His soul was pulsing at him, screaming of a terrifyingly great danger. Ning had the feeling that whatever threat had appeared was capable of instantly annihilating him.

.....

"What...what's this?!" Northson, who had just reached the grand sealing formation, was incomparably frantic as well. In his heart, he was also completely stunned. He felt as though he had been completely suppressed and sealed away; he couldn't even move a

single finger. He could also see that even the rocks in midair weren't moving at all, causing him to feel all the more horrified.

.....

The Dragonwhale was stunned as well. It was a Primal Diremonster, and a Dragonwhale at that; how incredibly great was its power? With but a single flip of its body, it could shatter the heavens and break the earth. And yet, in this instant, its massive body hung there in midair, completely unable to move.

"I've already reached the Primal stage. What power is this, which is capable of preventing me from even fighting back? Even Immortals shouldn't be this powerful. Can it be a Celestial Immortal? Or a Loose Immortal who has lived for hundreds of thousands or millions of years?" The Dragonwhale's heart was filled with many thoughts as well, and it too was both terrified and restless.

.....

Although Ning didn't move at all, he could still see. "Is that...?!" Ning suddenly stared in astonishment as the distant, bubbling river of lava began to part. The entire earth began to crack open, as a massive, fiery red hand, wreathed in lava, emerged from it. This hand...just staring at it, Ning became filled with despair.

This was something which occurred only when the disparity in power had reached an unbelievable level.

This palm of this titanic hand was more than three thousand meters long, and the palm lines were all clearly visible. These ancient, criss-crossing palm lines appeared to be carved or sculpted. As this titanic, fiery hand stretched out from the lava, it seized the head of the Dragonwhale in midair.

CRUNCH.

Like crushing an egg, the titanic, fiery hand easily pinched and squished the skull of the Dragonwhale. Although the Dragonwhale

was a Fiendgod Body Refiner, during the instant in which its head was pinched, even its soul was crushed and dispersed. It wouldn't even have the chance to reincarnate.

An exalted Primal Diremonster had just died!

"This..." Ning's heart was filled with incomparable shock, but his facial expressions remained completely unchanged from earlier. Even his facial muscles couldn't budge.

"Rumble..."

An even more titanically massive, fiery red head suddenly emerged from the splitting lava. Right; a head! He had a single eye, a nose, and a mouth. The size of his head alone was more than three thousand meters tall. His entire, massive body slowly emerged from the deep abysses of the earth. Only after half of his body was revealed did he come to a halt. His body seemed to be formed from solidified magma, and it emanated an incomparable, scorching aura. He glanced at the corpse of the Dragonwhale, which now lay amongst the shattered rocks. His single, fiery red pupil had a cold look in them.

"A puny earthworm actually dared to destroy my residence and disturb my slumber. He deserved to die," this titan rumbled.

Ning was unable to reveal any expressions on his face. But in his heart, he was screaming in shock, "Fiendgod, this is definitely a true Fiendgod!"

In this instant, Ning could think of no other possibilities. Neither Immortals nor Diremonsters matched this creature's appearance. This incomparably ancient, terrifying presence...in terms of appearance, aura, or power, the only type of creature which matched it was a Fiendgod! Fiendgods were born from the heavens themselves, and thus most had incomparably vast bodies.

They were incredibly powerful, and they had been born

unfathomable ages ago, during the Fiendgod Era!

"And two humans, along with a little snake." This ancient Fiendgod, who had been slumbering for who knows how long, swept his single eye to glance towards Ning, Northson, and the Azure Skysnake, as though he were looking at ants.

Chapter 33 – Fiendgods and Humans

Ji Ning, Mu Northson, and the Azure Skysnake could feel the hint of killing intent wafting towards them from this ancient Fiendgod. The three of them truly were like ants before him; whether or not he killed them was truly a trifling matter. After all, he had been sleeping happily deep beneath the river of lava. After having been woken up, it was rather irritated, and so the main culprit, that Dragonwhale, was the first to die. Ning and the others were just unlucky enough to be caught up by it all.

“No.” Northson, upon feeling that killing intent, couldn’t help but feel despair in his heart. Was he going to die?

“I can’t die. I can’t die! I just entered the Black-White College. I swore an oath in front of Mother’s grave...that I would make the Bluewood clan regret what they did! I haven’t, I haven’t done anything yet. I can’t accept this, I can’t!” Northson’s eyes were filled with boundless panic and regret, but under that boundless pressuring power, he couldn’t even change his facial expressions.

.....

“Am I going to die?” The Azure Skysnake was coiled around Northson’s arms. She was able to see the towering, vast, ancient Fiendgod from the corner of her eyes. The feeling that ancient Fiendgod gave her was that of the vast universe itself; she couldn’t even bring herself to want to try to resist.

“It’s sad that I’m going to die along with Woody. If I have to die, I should die alongside Master,” the Azure Skysnake murmured to herself. She looked towards Ning as well, but because the mountain was blocking her vision, she wasn’t able to see him at all.

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Ning also felt as though death was coming towards him. He had never had a strong a feeling of impending death before; not even

when he was progressing through the three trials of the underwater estate had he felt so powerless! He couldn't fight back at all...this sensation of impending death was something Ning couldn't resign himself to.

"I haven't destroyed Snowdragon Mountain yet."

"I haven't even come close to being a major power in the Three Realms."

"Father. Mother...I want to see if they are living good lives after their reincarnation."

"And Autumn Leaf...she must be waiting for me still."

Ning felt powerless. Although he still had that protective brooch in front of his chest that had been given to him by Immortal Diancai, which would release a protective sword-ki with but a thought...it would only be able to resist the power of a Loose Immortal or an Earth Immortal for a single breath's worth of time. In the face of a Fiendgod who had killed a Primal Diremonster as easily as stepping on an ant, what could it possibly do?

"Activate." Ning had bound the brooch long ago. With but a thought, Ning instantly attempted to activate the brooch, and the protective sword-ki within it tried to surge outside. Although it was probably useless, he had to at least give it a shot.

"Eh?" The ancient Fiendgod's single eye turned to stare at Ning. That seemingly omnipresent power seemed to completely focus on Ning as well, also pushing down towards Ning's brooch. The protective sword-ki within the brooch tried to charge out, but it was pressed down upon by an invisible, formless strength, preventing it from emerging.

It was pushed back inside!

Ning willed it to activate again.

But yet again, it was pushed back inside!

"How can this be?" Ning now felt truly powerless.

But a hint of surprise was in the ancient Fiendgod's single eye. He looked at Ning, murmuring to himself, "A Sword Immortal? A Loose Immortal or an Earth Immortal? The sword-ki is both condensed and sharp; although it's a bit different from that of Immortal Northwalker, who chased me around in the past, it's still quite astonishing. This human brat most assuredly has a powerful Sword Immortal behind him."

"That Sword Immortal...most likely has other colleagues and seniors who stand behind him as well." The ancient Fiendgod mused to himself, "I had best leave. I suffered miserably enough, the last time I was chased around."

As someone who had existed from the Fiendgod Era to the present era, he knew exactly how terrifying the humans were.

You kill a puny one, a strong one comes. You kill the strong one, an entire host of strong ones would come!

Humans simply had far too many experts, and they could send out entire groups of Immortals to attack him, a single person. The countless times he had suffered in this manner had caused him to become incomparably cautious. It was precisely this caution which had allowed him to survive to the present day. Otherwise, he would've been killed or sealed away by the humans long ago!

And, most importantly of all, humans trained far too quickly! Fiendgods were the favored children of the heavens. They were born with tremendous power, and didn't even suffer from the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations as they naturally increased in power. Only human cultivators had to deal with the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations! However, in turn, Fiendgods were far slower in learning and comprehending. They generally would spend tens or hundreds of thousands of years in training, or even millions of years.

Training, to them, took an incomparably long period of time.

But humans? A single human could become an Immortal in just a few centuries! A few centuries? This was an extremely short period of time for Fiendgods.

They had terrifying reproductive abilities, powerful learning abilities, and a rapid rate of advancement...this was why humans became the true leader of the countless races of this world, and indeed, of the entirety of the Three Realms. They were the true overlords! Even Fiendgods had to avoid them.

"Eh? And a Loose Immortal has come."

The ancient Fiendgod glanced towards the distant skies. It would be extremely easy for him to kill this Loose Immortal, but did he dare? He did not, because he knew that this Loose Immortal should be a member of the Raindragon Guard. If he killed one of them, very soon, the Guard would send tens or even hundreds of Loose Immortals... and perhaps even the imperial capital of the Grand Xia Dynasty would send some of its ancient, nigh-unkillable figures.

"Time to leave." The ancient Fiendgod's entire body instantly emerged from the ground. With but a single step....whoosh. Space itself twisted, and the ancient Fiendgod entered the twisting void, disappearing without a trace.

The spraying water and flying rocks that had previously been locked in midair finally collapsed. For a moment, there was utter chaos.

"He left?" Ning gawked in astonishment. And then, from the corner of his eyes, he stared at the massive corpse of the Dragonwhale. He immediately waved his hand, collecting the entire, massive, three thousand meter long corpse of the Dragonwhale into his storage-type magic treasure.

After having reached the early Wanxiang level, Ning had switched to using an Earth-ranked storage belt. This was a spoil of war he had

acquired from killing the Wanxiang Diremonsters earlier. This belt had an enormous space within it; however, the massive body of the Dragonwhale still took up more than half of the space within.

"Senior apprentice-brother." Northson ran over, excited.

"Master." The Azure Skysnake transformed into an azure shadow, moving forward and coiling herself around Ning's arm.

After having just escaped from certain death, they all had somewhat changed feelings in their hearts.

"Senior apprentice-brother, why did that Fiendgod leave?" Northson hurriedly asked, "And why didn't he kill us?"

"I don't know either." Ning shook his head. Although the Fiendgod had been mumbling to himself, the surrounding space had been completely locked; not even sound waves were able to move.

Naturally, Ning hadn't heard anything. But right at this moment...

A blood-robed elder suddenly appeared in the skies. This blood-robed elder had a crown on his head, and the blood-red robes were incomparably beautiful. However, a hint of resentment was within his gaze. "I actually let it escape. It ran quite quickly. It can consider itself lucky." As soon as he had sensed the local ripples, he had immediately hurried over here, but on the way, he had noticed that the Fiendgod had begun to flee. He had wanted to pursue it, but unfortunately, he hadn't been able to.

"You three." The blood-robed elder, after appearing in midair, stared downwards towards Ning, Northson, and the Azure Skysnake. As he did, the three of them felt their hearts grow numb.

"You should've seen that Fiendgod emerge, just now." The blood-robed elder's voice was icy cold, and slowly, the world itself around them seemed to begin to freeze. Ning, Northson, and the Azure Skysnake all felt an invisible pressure crush down towards them, quite similar to the technique which the Fiendgod had previously

used. However, this pressure was far weaker than that of the Fiendgod's. Despite that, however, Ning's group knew that this Immortal in front of them was still invincible, as far as they were concerned.

"Tell me, what did it look like?" The blood-robed elder pointed towards the Azure Skysnake. "You, monster. You speak first." A look of terror appeared on the Azure Skysnake's face, and she immediately said, "It was an extremely massive Fiendgod, with a palm of more than three thousand meters long. As for its body, it was thirty thousand meters tall! Its body appeared to be formed from lava stones. It had a single eye, a single nose, and a single mouth. It didn't have hair, and lava seemed to be flowing from its head as well."

A look of shock appeared in the eyes of the blood-robed elder. Him? Only now did the elder know which Fiendgod it was, and cold sweat trickled down his back. That was too close; fortunately, he hadn't caught the Fiendgod, as if he had, he probably would've died.

Next, he pointed towards Northson. "You. Speak." As soon as his words came out, Northson felt an invisible power command his soul. Although he remained conscious, his mouth began to speak by itself. "He emerged from the lava beneath us. His entire body was fiery red, he bound us with an invisible pressure that we weren't able to resist at all. He had a single eye, a single nose, a single mouth..."

"You. Speak." The blood-robed elder pointed at Ning. Ning, too, sensed an invisible divine will instantly invade his sea of consciousness. However, Ning's powerful divine will pushed back against it.

BOOM! A soundless, invisible collision of divine wills. Although the blood-robed elder held an absolute advantage, he was unable to control Ning like a puppet.

"Eh? Your divine soul is this powerful?" The blood-robed elder looked towards Ji Ning. "Which school are you from?"

"This junior is Ji Ning, disciple of the Black-White College. My master is Immortal Diancai." Ning continued respectfully, "Next to me is my junior apprentice-brother, Mu Northson. This Azure Skysnake is a spirit-beast I have recently tamed while wandering the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains."

"Immortal Diancai? The Black-White College?" The blood-robed elder nodded calmly, then said in a still-cold voice, "I ask you this; when the Fiendgod appeared...why didn't he kill the three of you?"

"I don't know." Ning shook his head.

I don't know.." Northson said the same thing.

Qingqing just shook her head, not even daring to speak.

The blood-robed elder knew very well that this particular, ancient Fiendgod had a strange temper. When angered, it would occasionally kill humans. However, because that ancient Fiendgod had always been cautious and low-key, and had never acted to kill human Loose Immortals with powerful backgrounds, the Grand Xia Dynasty had never put too much effort into chasing after and capturing him.

If he had engaged in wanton massacres and killed many influential figures, the Grand Xia Dynasty, in its rage, might send its full might against him. In that situation, it probably would be caught alive after just a few days!

"The three of you can consider yourself lucky to have survived a meeting with a Fiendgod," the blood-robed elder barked. "However, you absolutely must not reveal the details of this meeting. If I find out that you have, then the Raindragon Guard will hold you accountable for it!"

"Yes." Ning, Northson, and the Azure Skysnake all acknowledged this order. The blood-robed elder calmly waved his hand. "Then hurry up and leave."

Ning's group didn't dare to tarry; they immediately boarded the

dragon-headed warship, transforming into a streak of light and leaving at high speed.

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Whoosh!

Shortly after they left, yet another person appeared. This was a silver-haired youth with loose, unbound hair, and who also had a crown on his head. Immediately afterwards, a muscular, armored old man appeared as well.

"A Fiendgod emerged?" The silver-haired youth laughed calmly.

"Which Fiendgod was it?"

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Ning had guessed that the emergence of this ancient Fiendgod would cause quite a stir. Still, for now, these were problems for Immortals to deal with; they were far from being something he could intervene in.

"Senior apprentice-brother, this time, that was far too close. We nearly died there." Northson let out a sigh, staring towards the clouds nearby, then down towards the vast wilderness. "It's so good to be alive."

"It's so good to be alive." Ning nodded as well.

If he had truly died like this, then that would be far too unfair. There were many things he had yet to do!

Chapter 34 – Entering the Raindragon Guard

The dragon-headed warship was flying through the clouds. Ji Ning and Mu Northson, faces full of joy, were going through and binding the assorted magic treasures.

“Senior apprentice-brother, this Dragonwhale’s wealth was far greater than the wealth of those four Wanxiang Adepts we killed,” Northson said, incomparably excited. “Previously, we killed more than ten Wanxiang Diremonsters, but all their wealth combined... can’t match up to this single Dragonwhale.”

“Of course. The Dragonwhale King had roamed the world for ten millennia, and had even escaped from Primal Daoists on numerous occasions, then had advanced to the Primal stage itself,” Ning said. “And it just broke through to the Primal level. If it had spent a thousand years training at the Primal level, its wealth would be even more astonishing. However, a Primal Diremonster who had been training at the Primal level for a thousand years...I probably wouldn’t be able to block it at all.”

Northson immediately shook his head. “Even a Primal who had trained for a thousand years would perish upon encountering that ancient Fiendgod! And you were quite fast with your hands, senior apprentice-brother; as soon as the Fiendgod left, you immediately collected this massive corpse of the Dragonwhale. The Loose Immortal who came afterwards didn’t notice anything; if he had, he probably would’ve taken it with him.”

Ning laughed as well. He, too, felt that he had been quite clever. Still...this Dragonwhale King truly did possess an astonishing amount of wealth. There had been eight magic treasures stored in its Zifu region, and upon the Dragonwhale’s death, they had fallen to the ground alongside its corpse. Two were Earth-ranked storage treasures, four were Earth-ranked magic treasures, while two were Heaven-ranked magic treasures. Those two Heaven-ranked magic treasures alone were worth thousands of kilograms of liquefied

elemental essence! Ning and Northson were currently binding the storage-type treasures.

"So many magic treasures."

"What treasure is this?"

"And here are other storage-type treasures. These should have belonged to Adept Dong One and Adept Redleaf. Keep searching!"

"Here's a bottle of liquefied elemental essence. Wow, three hundred kilograms."

"I imagine this one must be quite excellent. It should be the protective magic treasure of Adept Dong One. He previously relied on it to escape from my attacks; I didn't expect that he would end up dying in the hands of this Dragonwhale, and his treasure would fall into my hands..."

Ning and Northson sorted through one magic treasure after another, appraising their value. The nearby Qingqing, in turn, picked up a few in curiosity. She was a Diremonster, after all...and one who hadn't been training for too long. She naturally wasn't able to assess the value of many unique, peculiar magic treasures. Thus, all she could do was stand next to them and celebrate with them.

"We've finished searching them." Ning let out a long sigh of relief. "That was awesome." Northson's eyes were glowing with delight, and he chortled, "Senior apprentice-brother, I really am beginning to admire you more and more. This Dragonwhale corpse you picked up...I admire you so much, I could prostrate myself before you."

Ning laughed as well. "Anything you need?" Northson took a careful glance, then shook his head and said, "None of them are on the Dao of Constructs. There really isn't anything I need in particular." Ning shook his head as well. "Nothing for I need either."

Dong One's protective treasure wasn't bad, but its power was only ordinary; in the face of a Primal Daoist, it wouldn't be able to hold for

too long. Ning, by relying on his own power, was already able to flee for his life in the face of a Primal Daoist's attacks; naturally, he wouldn't care too much about it. His protective sword-ki treasure was something which could block the attacks of even a Loose Immortal or Earth Immortal for a full breath's worth of time.

"Let's split the liquefied elemental essence in half," Ning said. "As for the magic treasures, let us send them to the Heavenly Treasures Mountain and sell them, then we'll split the revenue."

"But you collected them, senior apprentice-brother." Northson stared at him, but Ning just laughed and 'barked' at him, "Stop kidding around, all I did was grab it."

"What about me, what about me?" The nearby Qingqing said. Ning gave her a sideways glance. "You miser! For you, finding treasures is as easy as eating food or drinking water. Stop fighting with impoverished cultivators like us over treasure." Qingqing's hill-sized chunk of ancient glacial ice alone was worth more than five thousand kilograms of liquefied elemental essence.

Qingqing instantly pouted. "Stingy!"

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Time flowed on. In the days after this, Ning's group returned to the dire-ice room to continue their training. That place was quite secretive and hidden. After the three months came to an end, Ning's group began their return journey to the Raindragon Guard encampment.

"Here we are." The dragon-headed warship soared there through the clouds. Ning stood atop the ship, staring towards the distant earth. Soon, he saw, off in the distance, a mountain peak. It was the Raindragon Guard's encampment.

"Hahaha, we're back. We are about to become Raindragon Guards!" Northson whooped in delight as the warship hastened downwards.

This time, no one came to block Ning's group. They flew directly towards the peak of the mountain encampment, the place next to the teleportation array. Ning instantly saw those two plainly dressed elders who stood next to the teleportation array; it was the same two Ning had seen last time, that skinny old man and the fat old man.

"Two more made it back alive," the fat elder laughed, and then his gaze fell upon the little snake wrapped around Ning's wrists. "A monster?"

"This is a spirit-beast which I tamed in the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains," Ning said.

"You are quite formidable, young fellow. The wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains are incomparably dangerous...it's one thing for you to come back alive, but you actually brought a spirit-beast back as well?" The fat elder shook his head and sighed. "The two of you can go rest over there and wait a while. There are still thirty or so who haven't arrived yet."

Ning glanced towards the distance in surprise. A total of just sixteen Immortal cultivators were there, either seated or standing and chatting with each other. Including Ning's group, there were only eighteen present.

"Senior, how do you know that there are thirty who have yet to arrive?" Ning asked curiously. Northson was puzzled as well. "Right. A hundred of us headed out; how do you know how many have died?"

Both the fat elder and the skinny elder laughed. "Have you forgotten the talisman which each of you bound upon entering the Crimson Dragon Mountains?" The fat elder asked.

Ning and Northson instantly remembered; only after binding the talismans had they been permitted to enter the Crimson Dragon Mountains, as otherwise, they wouldn't have been allowed in.

"When one of you dies, the talisman becomes an ownerless object. Thus, we Raindragon Guards would immediately become aware of it," the fat elder said. "Right now, fifty two of the talismans are in good shape, while the others are ownerless."

Ning and Northson now both understood. So that tiny little talisman they had received...actually had this secret hidden with it. The Raindragon Guard's methods really were unpredictable.

"Senior," Northson asked, "A while ago, my senior apprentice-brother and I came back to send some ordinary mortals here. Those ordinary mortals who had been corralled and raised as livestock by the monsters...how are they doing?"

"Yes, are they doing alright?" Ning asked.

The fat elder said, somewhat surprised, "Oh, it was you two who sent them over? Don't worry; of course they are doing alright. We Raindragon Guards will naturally take care of those pitiable tribesmen; however, they were teleported away long ago and left the Gaol Mountains long ago. We Raindragon Guards will take good care of them."

Ning nodded slightly. That was good. Only, he didn't know...what that little kid called 'Ironboy' would end up like.

"Let's go." Ning immediately moved with Northson to one side. With but a flick of their fingers, they each pointed towards a boulder that had been chopped flat. Crackle...frost appeared, instantly covering the stones with a layer of ice. These boulders were used for the Raindragon Guards who had come here to rest on, but with so much wind and dust swirling about, they had naturally been quite dirty. After Ning and Northson revealed this ability, quite a few nearby cultivators looked towards them.

Dire-ice?

Soon, cultivators came over to chat with the two of them. Ning and

Northson chatted with them, making quite a few friends amongst them.

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One surviving cultivator after another hurried back from locations throughout the wild marshes of the Gaol Mountains. Eastriver Cloudsoar, who both Ning and Northson recognized, returned as well. However, Cloudsoar returned with only one arm, and the baleful aura around him was much stronger than it had been in the past. This caused quite a bit of silent discussion amongst the various cultivators.

"What happened?" Northson sent mentally, "In the past, Eastriver Cloudsoar was quite the talker; why is it that he's grown so much colder? And he's lost an arm...but it's just an arm. All he needs to do is eat a spirit-pill that allows the regeneration of limbs. In addition, Wanxiang Adepts can also slowly regrow their arms by using their elemental ki. Why hasn't he done so at all?"

Ning shook his head. He, too, had noticed...that after this tempering experience, Cloudsoar seemed to have changed dramatically.

In the blink of an eye, half a day passed. More cultivators returned. "Look, Meng Liuqing!" Northson sent mentally to Ning, "She's the only survivor of those six Immortal cultivators who tried to gang up on us."

"Meng Liuqing?" Ning saw this female cultivator of the Meng clan arrive as well. She descended from the skies. Upon seeing Ning and Northson, her face changed slightly. She immediately turned and was about to walk to one side, when...

"Meng Liuqing!"

A fierce voice rang out.

Meng Liuqing turned her head, only to see a one-armed, white-robed youth, filled with a baleful aura that reached the heavens, and

whose eyes were filled with an icy light. "I, Eastriver Cloudsoar, will definitely avenge my slain younger sister. Meng Liuqing...prepare for your death! And the other five...I won't spare any of you!" As the disciple of the Eastriver clan, he dared to say these words openly and directly!

"The other five?" Meng Liuqing shook her head. "I don't know about Dong One, but the other four...Northriver Zhou, Xu Manquan, Nongsan, and Jihe...are already dead."

Cloudsoar was stunned. "Dead?"

All the surrounding cultivators looked towards them as well. Dead? Four Wanxiang Adepts had died? These cultivators all grew curious... what exactly had happened?

"They died in the hands of the two disciples of the Black-White College." Meng Liuqing glanced sideways towards Ning and Northson. Enmity had been created between her and the two of them; naturally, she didn't mind giving the two of them a bit of extra trouble. Earlier, she had intentionally reported the names of those four, so that the friends and family members of the four would know who had done the deed.

"You b*tch!" Northson instantly rose to his feet and roared with fury, "Previously, the six of you tried to ambush and sneak attack the two of us. Four of you died, and now, you are still trying to plot against us? Listen up, you b*tch! In the future, you'd best never run into me. If I do, I'll take your life!"

"Right." Ning stared coldly towards her as well. Unfortunately, this was the encampment of the Raindragon Guards; no one dared to fight here. As for Meng Liuqing, she just gave Ning and Northson a cold glance; since there was already enmity between them, why fear this additional threat?

"Fellow Daoists Ji Ning and Mu Northson." Eastriver Cloudsoar turned to look towards Ning and Northson, then bowed deeply. "Those six

didn't go kill Diremonsters; instead, they came to ambush and kill us, fellow cultivators. They deserved to die in your hands, fellow Daoists. In the future, if either of you need anything, fellow Daoists, just let me know; I, Eastriver Cloudsoar, will definitely comply, even if I have to go through water or climb past fire."

"You are too courteous. We, too, were ambushed and attacked, so we simply dealt with them." Ning and Northson hurriedly went over to raise Cloudsoar from his bow.

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Soon, all of the remaining, surviving cultivators had returned. Adept Redleaf returned as well! Only, Adept Redleaf had no idea that it had been Ji Ning and Mu Northson within that formation! Still, he had heard the Dragonwhale King say something about 'blame Ji Ning', and so he naturally gave Ning a deep look.

"You fifty two survived. If you have brought back the corpse or the head of a Wanxiang Diremonster, then you will naturally become Raindragon Guards," the skinny elder said. "Go. Go into the teleportation array and return to the Crimson Dragon Mountains."

The fifty two cultivators all entered the teleportation array. Soon, the array lit up, and Ning's group of fifty two were once more teleported back to the Crimson Dragon Mountains, more than two million kilometers away.

Glossary

PEOPLE:

Gods:

Pangu : The creator deity who made the universe, the Fiendgod of Primordial Chaos.

Nuwa : The creator of humans, currently supposedly the most powerful god in existence and the only one to reach Pangu's level.

Cui Jue : The Lord of Cui Palace, the First Judge of the Dead. Also from Earth.

Grandma Meng : Dispenses her special 'elixir' in the land of the dead, which causes the dead to forget their memories before being reincarnated.

Ji Clan :

Ji Ning : The main character of this novel.

Ji Yichuan : The father of Ning, nicknamed the 'Raindrop Sword'. Number one expert of the Ji clan of the West Prefecture.

Yuchi Snow : The mother of Ning. Member of the Yuchi clan.

Ji Ninefire : The Patriarch of all five prefectures of the Ji clan.

Ji Young : The Prefecture Lord of the Ji clan of the West Prefecture.

Ji Lee : Nicknamed the 'Fire God', the number two expert of the Ji clan of the West Prefecture. Leads a faction opposed to Prefecture Lord Young.

Ji Jadewich : The son of Ji Lee.

Ji Grizzly : The adoptive son of Ji Lee, had been taken in as an infant by a grizzly bear monster.

Ji Redflower : Friend of Ji Yichuan, rides an Azure Firebird.

Spring Grass : Also known as 'Miwa'. One of the two maidservants of Ning who took care of him as he grew up.

Blacktooth : The father of Spring Grass, and the chief of Blacktooth

Tribe.

Autumn Leaf : One of the two maidservants of Ning who took care of him as he grew up.

Blindfish : The number one archery expert, serves the Ji clan.

Mowu: An experienced Ninefang Warrior, loyal to Ji Yichuan. Follows Ning on his first adventure along with Autumn Leaf.

Ironwood Clan

Ironwood Zhan: A late Ki Refiner Xiantian expert of the Ironwood clan. Has a Bi'an Tiger as his spirit beast. Wielded the **Blackwood Vinewhip** as his weapon.

Miscellaneous

Juhua Immortal : A powerful Loose Immortal who lived for millions of years. Controlled an Immortal estate which he was the third master of.

Rampart : The disciple of the Juhua Immortal. Died somewhere.

CREATURES:

Godbeasts :

Armored Wurm : A dragon type Godbeast that seems to be like an Ankylosaurus.

Whitewater Hound : A large, snow-white hound-type creature. Ji Yichuan has one, who once saved Ning and Snow.

Emerald Skyserpent: A serpent-type Godbeast, one of the more powerful creatures in Eastmount Marsh. Fought against Ning several times when Ning was at the peak Houtian stage. Capable of 'Void Blink' upon reaching the 'one with the world' level.

Howling Moonwolf :

Earthquake Rhino :

Redclawed Goldenraven :

Thundersea Owl :

Landwyrm :**Other Monsters :**

Serpentwing : A named late Xiantian level winged serpent, lives in Serpentwing Lake.

Azure Firebird : A flying fire-type bird-type monster. One is in service to the Ji clan of the West Prefecture.

ITEMS:

Dao Battle-Armor: A type of armor that allows multiple users to join their strength together.

Dao-seal : A magic scroll imbued with certain powers, such as the 'Divine Movement Seal', 'Light Body Seal', and more.

Kalestone : A naturally occurring gemstone which is like a 'bag of holding', able to store a certain amount of materials in an extradimensional space.

Goldstar Shirt : A naturally occurring treasure which protects against all attacks below the Xiantian level.

Darknorth swords : A set of three swords, extremely sharp. Originally a damaged 'magic treasure' of the 'flying sword' variety that was ranked. Purchased by Ning.

Blackwood Vinewhip : A magic treasure previously held by Ironwood Zhan.

Traceless Talisman : A single-use talisman that can allow a person to travel ten thousand kilometers in an instant.

TECHNIQUES:**Sword Techniques:****Possessed by the Ji Clan :**

[Raindrop Sutra]: The most defensive of the Ji clan. The technique

which Ji Yichuan became famous for using, thus being nicknamed the 'Raindrop Sword'. Includes the attacks: 'Drizzling Rain', 'Rain Line', 'Raindrop Pierces Rocks', 'Thin Streams Flow Forever', 'Tempest Curtain', 'Watertight', 'Eternally Fresh Waterflow', 'Merciless Waterflow'.

[Thunderflame Sword]: The most offensive technique of the Ji clan. Only three stances were found in the burnt manual, but despite that, is incredibly powerful. No defensive stances. Includes the attacks: *Thunderflash Flint, Blazing Thunderclap, Moth Flies Into the Flame* .

[Polaris Secret Manual]: A very balanced, orthodox technique, part of the [Polaris Sword Manual].

[Illusion Sutra]: An insidious technique that could be applied to any weapon. Allowed one to hide their true powers and actions.

[Melody of 10000 Swords]: The first 'elite' swordplay the Ji clan obtained, which they themselves developed. The most complicated, yet also the simplest when mastered.

Formation Techniques

Yin Yang Twin Energy Formation : A formation which Ironwood Zhan of the Ironwood clan had, set up by using eight formation flags. Very powerful at the Xiantian level.

Lesser Thousand Sword Formation : A formation of an enemy of the Juhua Immortal, uses up to hundreds of sword-type magic treasures.

Fiendgod Body Refining Techniques :

Possessed by the Ji Clan :

[Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]: The technique Ning chooses. The unquestioned best Fiendgod Body Refining, but also the hardest to learn. One has to be able to sense the Great Yang (Sun) and the Great Ying (Moon), then absorb their energies. If one is extremely suited, the first time training it, small balls of energy will appear in the trainer's hands, with the left having the 'Moon' with a picture of an 'Osmanthus Tree', while the right would have the 'Sun' with a picture of the 'Golden Crow'.

[Calamity Fiend] , [Indestructible Blood Fiend], [Song of the Inferno], [Vajra Buddhist Sutras], [Freeform Soul] , [Eternal Mysteries of the Yellow Earth] , [Spirit Fox Sutra] , [Sutra of the Future Buddha]

Footwork Techniques:

Shadewind Steps : A unique set of footwork techniques which only Ning's mother, Yuchi Snow, knows. Taught to Ning.

Windwing Evasion : Another set of footwork techniques which only Ning's mother, Yuchi Snow, knows. Can only be trained at the Xiantian level.

Divine Abilities:

Kuafu Sunchaser :

72 Transformations :

Three Heads, Six Arms :

Houyi Shooting the Sun :

Heavenly Transformation: Windwing Evasion (see above)

Other Techniques:

Nuwa Painting visualization technique : A soul-strengthening visualization technique taught by Lord Cui. Supposedly an elite skill even in the Deva realm, much less the mortal realms.

Inner Visualization of the Shining Sun-Moon Buddha : The visualization technique used by the Juhua Immortal.

Waterflame Lotus : A technique which Ning develops during a night of meditation by a pool through a hint of the Dao which he came to understand.

LOCATIONS:

Grand Xia Dynasty : The empire which rules over the entire world. Trillions of years old.

Stillwater Commandery: The Commandery region in which Swallow

Mountain is located. Controlled by the Marquisate of Stillwater.

Dark North Sea : The unending ocean in the north of the world.

Where Yichuan and Snow met and conceived Ning.

Swallow Mountain : A massive area, where Ji clan of the West Prefecture is one of the local hegemons.

Serpentwing Lake : A large lake a hundred kilometers long in the Swallow Mountain Area. Lair to the Xiantian monster, Serpentwing.

Eastmount Marsh : A large marsh with a lake in the middle of it. Home to many Xiantian level Diremonsters.

TERMS AND PHRASES:

Power Levels :

Houtian : Lifespan of a hundred years.

Xiantian : Lifespan of two hundred years. 'Diremonster' is a term used to refer to monsters who have reached this level.

Zifu : The 'Violet Palace'. At this level, one will be addressed as Zifu Disciple. Lifespan of five hundred years. Generally capable of 'dividing the mind'

Wanxiang : 'Myriad Manifestations'. At this level, one will be addressed as Wanxiang Adept. Lifespan of eight hundred years. Generally capable of 'divine will', which allows them to control objects with their mind.

Primordial : Can be referred to as Primordial Daoist. Generally capable of 'divine sense', an extrasensory ability.

Void : Can be referred to as 'Land Immortal', or 'Earthly Immortal'. In the later levels of the Void stage, a heavenly tribulation will test them. If they fail, then they will die and their spirits will be extinguished. If a Primordial's body is destroyed but manages to escape with his soul, then he will become a 'Loose Immortal', whose power is roughly on par with the 'Earth Immortals'.

Celestial Immortal : Only at this stage can one be considered to have ascended beyond the Three Realms and no longer be formed by the Five Elements!

Insight Levels:

Basic => Advanced => 'One With the World' => 'True Meaning of the Dao' => 'Dao Realm' => 'Dao Path'

The Greater Universe :

Three Realms : The 'Heaven' Realm, the 'Mortal Realm', and the 'Netherworld Kingdom Realm'

Six Realms of Reincarnation : Deva, Asura (these two are Heaven realm), Human, Animal (these two are 'Mortal' realm), Preta Ghost, Hell (these two are 'Netherworld Kingdom' realm)

Book of Life and Death : The book on which every person's fate is written, their birth, their life, and their death. A person can change their fate by their actions, however. Controlled by Lord Cui.

Miscellaneous Terms and Phrases:

Beasthead : Used to refer to an amount of gold that weighed ten pounds in the world where Ning was born into for his second life.

Fiendgod : Powerful creatures that were born from nature itself and possess unbelievable might. The creator of the universe, Pangu, was himself a Fiendgod.

Godbeasts : Monstrous beasts that have the lineage of the Fiendgods in them. Far more powerful than normal beasts.

Fiendgod Body Refining Technique : Techniques meant to build up the body and make it as powerful as a Fiendgod's. Far more powerful than Ki Refining of the same level. Cannot utilize magic treasures unless also training in Ki Refining.

Ki Refining technique : Techniques meant to build up internal ki energy, which allows one to use magic treasures at the Xiantian level.

Ninefang Warriors : A term for peak Houtian level warriors in the Swallow Mountain region.

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